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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Fengal fury stuns three TN districts

19 killed in India & Lanka; TN seeks Rs 2,000 aid from Centre

VILLUPURAM, 2 DEC

Villupuram, Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts in north Tamil Nadu reeled under unprecedented flooding on Monday following extremely heavy rainfall, virtually blocking access to villages and residential colonies as bridges and roads overflowed, inundating huge acreage of standing crops and leaving passengers stranded as rail and road traffic was hit.

At least 19 people have died in India and Sri Lanka due to rain-related incidents.

Roads came completely under water in several parts of Villupuram, and nearby Cuddalore. River Thenpennai was in spate and trees were uprooted in several areas. Several houses at Aragandanallur in Villupuram were flooded.

Parts of Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts, in west Tamil Nadu, too witnessed floods unseen in the past two decades. Uthangarai in Krishnagiri district received a whopping 50 cm rainfall, Villupuram district received upto 42 cm and Harur in Dharmapuri received 33 cm.

Meanwhile, the IMD issued a warning of significant rainfall in Kerala. On Tuesday, heavy to very heavy rain is anticipated in the northern and central parts of the state. Intermittent light to moderate rain with occasional thunderstorms is expected to persist over the next five days, IMD said.

In Puducherry, Chief Minister N Rangasamy on Monday announced a slew of relief measures for the damage caused by Cyclone Fengal.

Further, 3.54 lakh families under the public distribution system will be provided Rs 5,000 each, credited directly to their bank accounts, he said. Affected farmers will receive a compensation of Rs 30,000 per hectare, while dairy farmers will receive Rs 40,000 for each cow and Rs 20,000 for each calve lost Tamil Nadu seeks Rs 2,000 crore aid from the National Disaster Response Fund to recover from Cyclone Fengal devastation. *—PTI*

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A flood-hit area following heavy rainfall in the aftermath of Cyclone Fengal, in Villupuram, Tamil Nadu, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Rains lead to traffic mayhem in Bengaluru

Bengaluru 2 Dec

Heavy rains induced by cyclone Fengal wreaked havoc across Bengaluru on Monday, causing widespread waterlogging and paralysing traffic in several parts of the City. Areas such as Airport Road, Silk Board Junction, Whitefield, Koramangala, and Hebbal were among the worst affected, leaving commuters stranded for hours during the morning rush. In the aftermath of the rains, Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) issued an advisory urging people to drive with caution.

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SAFETY PRIORITISED

Schools to remain closed in K'taka dists

BENGALURU/KOLAR/ MYSURU 2 DEC

Bengaluru and other parts of the State are expected to receive rainfall for the next two days owing to the impact of Cyclone Fengal that has now weakened, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday.

Meanwhile, authorities have declared a holiday for anganwadis, schools and colleges in Mandya, Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Kolar and Chikkaballapur on 3 December as a precautionary measure.

The remnant low pressure area is likely to emerge over southeast and adjoining east-central Arabian Sea off north Kerala Karnataka coasts around 3 December.

A yellow alert has been issued for Bengaluru and districts like Hassan, Mandya and Ramanagara for Monday, said C S Patil, IMD Bengaluru director.

An orange alert has been issued for districts like Udupi, Chikmagaluru, Chikkabalbura which are expected to receive very heavy to heavy rainfall, according to IMD officials.

Scattered heavy rainfall is very likely to occur over Hassan, Mandya and Ramanagara districts while moderate rains are very likely to occur at most places over Tumakuru, Bengaluru Rural, Bengaluru Ur-ban, Chikkaballapura, Chithradurga and Kolar districts. Meanwhile the weather in Bengaluru is forecasted to be generally cloudy with moderate to heavy rain at intervals. The city might also see fog in the morning. *—PTI*

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla conducts proceedings in the House on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Govt & Oppn break impasse, agree on Constitution debate

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

An agreement between the government and opposition parties has been reached to alleviate the ongo-ing deadlock in Parliament, with discussions on the Constitution set to take place in both Houses. The Lok Sabha will hold these discussions on 13 and 14 December, while the Rajya Sabha will follow suit on 16 and 17 December, marking the 75th anniversary of the Constitution's adoption.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, who announced the schedule, expressed optimism about the functioning of both Houses moving forward. The breakthrough came during a meeting led by Speaker Om Birla and floor leaders from various parties.

Opposition groups had previously called for discussions to commemorate the significant anniversary. However, tensions remain high, with the Congress persistently raising concerns over the indictment of Adani Group chairperson Gautam Adani and other officials on bribery and fraud charges. Protests re-garding the recent violence in Sambhal and unrest in Manipur have caused repeated adjournments in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha since the Winter Session commenced on 25 November.

Notably, some opposition factions, particularly the Trinamool Congress (TMC), have diverged from the Congress agenda, advocating for discussions on broader issues like unemployment and alleged discrimi-nation against opposition-ruled states in fund allocation. A TMC source indicated that the party does not wish to merely support the Congress's narrative.Meanwhile, the ruling BJP has countered by asserting that the opposition, particularly the Congress, pre-viously violated constitutional norms while in power, highlighting that the Modi government has fortified constitutional principles over its tenure. *—PTI*

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MAHAYUTI TO DECLARE CM'S NAME ON 4 DEC

MUMBAI, 2 DEC

The name of the Maharashtra chief minister will be announced on Wednesday, a day ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of the Mahayuti government, after the BJP elects its legislature party leader, a senior functionary said on Monday.

The BJP on Monday named Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and former Gujarat chief minis-ter Vijay Rupani as central observers for its Maharashtra legislature party's meeting, where the MLAs will elect their leader.

"Rupani and Sitharaman would meet the BJP's elected representatives in Mumbai on Wednesday. Fol-lowing this meeting, the chosen candidate's name will be relayed to senior leaders in Delhi. These ob-servers will then announce the elected leader of the BJP, who is set to be the next chief minister," the BJP functionary told PTI.

The BJP has already announced that the new chief minister will take oath on 5 December.

Though the party has not made any formal announcement, a senior BJP leader on Sunday claimed Devendra Fadnavis' name has been finalised for the CM's post.

The BJP's two main allies in the Mahayuti colation, the Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party, are each tipped to be given deputy CM positions in the new government. *—PTI*

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B'desh Consulate breached in Tripura

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

India has expressed deep regret over a breach of the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala, Tripura, amid rising tensions following the arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das in Bangladesh. Thousands rallied around the diplomatic mission, protesting the treatment of minorities in Bangladesh, which has raised concerns about security for consular properties.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated, "The incident of the breach of premises at the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission is deeply regrettable." It emphasised that diplomatic and consular properties must remain untouchable under any circumstances.

Members of Tripura Congress protest against Chief Adviser of Bangladesh Muhammad Yunus in Agartala on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

In response, the MEA confirmed measures are be-ing taken to enhance security for the Bangladeshi missions in India, including the High Commission in New Delhi.

India had previously expressed serious concerns regarding increasing violence against Hindus and the surge of extremist rhetoric in Bangladesh. *—PTI*

Govt clears construction of 2 nuke subs: Navy Chief

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

The government has approved the construction of two indige-nously designed nuclear attack submarines and is expected to ink contracts next month to procure 26 naval variant of Rafale jets and three Scor-pene submarines, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh Tripathi said on Monday.

At a press conference ahead of Navy Day, Admiral Tripathi said his force is keeping a close watch on the Chinese naval activities in the Indian Ocean, and described as "surprising" the growth of the Pakistan Navy given the condition of its economy, adding the eight brand new submarines being built will add sig-nificant combat potential to it.

The Navy Chief said India will induct around 95 ships in the next 10 years as the focus has been to build a future-ready naval force by 2047 that will consolidate India's resurgence as a maritime power and en-sure credible deterrence.

On the Cabinet Committee on Security's approval to build two nuclear attack submarines (SSNs), Admiral Tripathi said the plan is to commission the first one by 2036-37 and the second one in about two years from then. *—PTI*

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Guinea: 56 dead in stampede after football match

CONAKRY, 2 DEC

At least 56 people have been killed after violent clashes during a football match led to a stampede in Guinea's second-largest city of N'Zerekore, according to the government. "Protests of dissatisfaction with refereeing decisions led to stone-throwing by supporters, resulting in fatal stampedes" at Sunday's match, the government statement said on Monday, published as a news ticker on national television. The violence broke out during a match on Sunday afternoon in N'Zerekore, home to 2,00,000 people, where rival fans stormed the field. *—PTI*

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No voter should be excluded: SC to EC

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Supreme Court on Monday sought the Election Commission's response on a PIL challenging its decision to increase the maximum number of voters from 1,200 to 1,500 at every polling station, saying no elector should be excluded. While asking the poll panel to clarify its stand, a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Jus-tice Sanjay Kumar said, "We are concerned. No voter should be excluded." The bench, which will hear the matter on 27 January, 2025, asked the EC to provide a copy of its affidavit to the petitioner before the next hearing. *—PTI*

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BJP issues showcause notice to Yatnal

BENGALURU, 2 DEC

Following the launch of a month-long anti-Waqf march, Karnataka BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal has received a showcause notice from the party's Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) for his ongoing criti-cism of the state leadership. The notice, issued on 1 December, states that Yatnal must respond within ten days to avoid potential disciplinary action.

Yatnal labelled the notice as "fake" and asserted his commitment to Hindutva and the opposition to 'dy-nastic politics.' Om Pathak, CDC member secretary, highlighted Yatnal's persistent defiance of party directives. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

GOVT GETS 7-DAY ULTIMATUM

Farmers' march to Delhi brings capital to a halt

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Farmers from different parts of Uttar Pradesh demanding adequate compensation for their lands acquired by the government marched towards Delhi on Monday but were stopped at the Noida-Delhi border where they sat on a dharna.

The farmers said if their demands were not met within seven days, they would again march towards Delhi.

Raising slogans of "Bol Kisan, Halla Bol", the protesting farmers gathered at the Mahamaya flyover on the Dadri-Noida link road and began their 'Delhi Chalo' march around 11.30 am.

Massive traffic snarls caused inconvenience to commuters crossing the Delhi-Noida borders as police set up multiple layers of barricades and deployed heavy security to stop the march, which coincided with Parliament's Winter Session.Bumper-to-bumper traffic was witnessed at Noida's Chilla border for several hours as the protesters, waving banners and flags of various farmer groups, crossed the initial barricades.

They were finally stopped near Dalit Prerna Sthal, around a kilometre from the Chilla border, an entry point to Delhi, where senior police officers tried to pacify them. Traffic on the stretch resumed around 6 pm after the protesting farmers gave a week's time to fulfil their various demands, including the payment of land acquisition dues, as mandated by the Land Acquisition Act, 2013. *—PTI*

SC TO FARMERS: DON'T LET STIR DISTURB PEOPLE

The Supreme Court on Monday asked Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri border point to press for the acceptance of farmers' demands, to persuade the protesting farmers not to obstruct highways and cause inconvenience to people. ***>>>More on Page 4***

City cop suspended for misbehaving with woman

BENGALURU, 2 DEC

A police constable was suspended for allegedly harassing and misbehaving with a woman tech professional under the pretext of conducting passport verification in the city. The accused, identified as police constable Kiran, was suspended after an order was issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Bengaluru West) S Girish after the woman lodged a formal complaint against him. According to the complaint, Kiran visited the woman's residence for passport verification but allegedly behaved inappropriately and harassed her during the process. The woman subsequently reported the incident to senior police officials. "Following an inquiry, the constable was suspend," DCP Girish stated on Monday. — *Salar News*

PHOTO: SALAR

3 injured in LPG cylinder blast in Bommasandra

BENGALURU, 2 DEC

A suspected gas leak led to an LPG cylinder explosion in a rented accommodation in Kachanayakanahalli on Monday, leaving three individuals, including a woman, with severe burn injuries. The victims, identified as Bidan Das, Dayal Shanti, and Gulab Karmakar, are natives of Assam and worked as labourers at a construction site on Grand Icon Road in Bommasandra. All three were rushed to Narayana Hospital, where their condition is reported to be critical. Preliminary investigations by police and fire officials suggest the explosion was caused by a gas leak, possibly due to the regulator being left on overnight. The blast caused damage to the rented house, and neighbours reported hearing a loud noise that shook nearby buildings. —*Salar News*

Jumbo scare at Kukke Subrahmanya temple in M'luru

MANGALURU, 2 DEC

A wild tusker caused a commotion when it wandered into the premises of the famous Kukke Subrahmanya Temple on Sunday night, according to temple sources. Devotees present were initially taken aback, with some mistaking the elephant for the temple's resident pachyderm and attempting to offer prayers. However, temple staff quickly clarified that it was not the temple's elephant, prompting them to advise visitors to evacuate for safety. This led to a brief episode of fear and anxiety among the worshippers. Authorities have issued warnings that the tusker may return and have urged both temple staff and devotees to remain vigilant. —*PTI*

CAMPCO seeks funding for arecanut research

MANGALURU, 2 DEC

The Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Limited (CAMPCO) is urging the Union government to conduct scientific research to investigate the safety and potential anti-carcinogenic properties of arecanut in its natural form. In a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, CAMPCO president A. Kishore Kumar Kodgi highlighted the crop's economic and cultural significance, pointing out that it is cultivated on 9.55 lakh hectares across India, supporting countless farmers. He noted that the WHO's classification of arecanut as carcinogenic is based on studies of harmful mixtures rather than the raw form. CAMPCO has proposed collaborative research involving premier institutions and seeks a review of the WHO classification. —*PTI*

Cyclone Fengal causes traffic chaos amid rain

Meanwhile, BMTC buses broke down due to blockages on Whitefield and Residency Road

BENGALURU 2 DEC

Heavy rains induced by Cyclone Fengal wreaked havoc across Bengaluru on Monday, causing widespread waterlogging and paralyzing traffic in several parts of the city. Areas such as Airport Road, Silk Board Junction, Whitefield, Koramangala, and Hebbal were among the worst affected, leaving commuters stranded for hours during the morning rush.

In the aftermath, Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) issued an advisory urging people to drive cautiously. Several key stretches, including Whitefield, Sony World Signal, Sanjaynagar Cross, and B Narayanapura, were rendered impassable. Authorities also recommended avoiding unnecessary travel to reduce congestion and ensure safety.

Traffic on the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA)-Hebbal flyover was severely disrupted, with vehicles stuck in long queues on both the upper and lower levels.

In other areas, office-goers faced significant delays, particularly on arterial roads such as Outer Ring Road, Mysore Road, and Nagawara. Low-lying neighborhoods experienced overflowing drains and submerged underpasses, prompting traffic police to divert vehicles through alternative routes, including Guruppanapalya, Old Mysore Road, and Khodays Junction.

Expressing frustration over the prolonged delays, Rekha Sharma, a software engineer, said, "I left Whitefield at 8 a.m. and reached Koramangala two hours later. All the routes were waterlogged, and the potholes only made it worse."

Abhishek Rao, a sales executive, described his experience on Old Madras Road: "Visibility was so low that it felt dangerous to drive. The lack of maintenance on these roads during monsoon seasons is appalling," he said.

Adding to the chaos, BMTC buses broke down due to blockages on Whitefield and Residency Road, and fallen trees disrupted movement on Banaswadi and KR Puram Main Road.

Residents have been advised to stay updated on weather conditions and call the emergency helpline (112) for assistance if needed. —*Salar News*

Traffic movement on Sankey Road in Bengaluru was extremely slow on Monday due to heavy rains **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

- Low-lying neighborhoods experienced overflowing drains and submerged underpasses, prompting traffic police to divert vehicles through alternative routes, including Guruppanapalya

Elderly siblings rescued after house collapses

BENGALURU, 2 DEC

An elderly man and his sister were rescued after their house in Jagajeevan Ram Nagar collapsed due to rainfall in the wee hours of Monday. A wall collapsed around 12.30am following which the neighbours rushed to rescue them. In a few minutes, the roof also fell down, they said. The man, Lokesh suffered minor injuries and was immediately taken to hospital, sources told Salar News. Meanwhile the neighbours arranged for a temporary accomodation. —*Salar News*

RAIN MAYHEM

Autorickshaws navigate through waterlogged roads in Nagawara due to incessant rain on Monday; Policemen, along with civic workers, clear fallen trees on Banaswadi Main Road **PHOTOS: SALAR**

BJP issues showcause notice to MLA Yatnal

BENGALURU, 2 DEC

Following the launch of a month-long anti-Waqf march, Karnataka BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal has received a showcause notice from the party's Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) for his ongoing criticism of the state leadership. The notice, issued on 1 December, states that Yatnal must respond within ten days to avoid potential disciplinary action.

Yatnal labelled the notice as "fake" and asserted his commitment to Hindutva and the opposition to 'dynastic politics.' Om Pathak, CDC member secretary, highlighted Yatnal's persistent defiance of party directives and noted previous warnings had gone unheeded, expressing concern over repeated breaches of party discipline.

Basanagouda Yatnal **PHOTO: FB**

The notice also referenced Yatnal's critical stance towards former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa and his son, BY Vijayendra, urging the BJP central leadership to address what he terms "dynastic politics." He has spearheaded the anti-Waqf march, which commenced on 25 November and will conclude on 25 December, as part of his campaign to protect farmers and Hindus against eviction notices from the state Waqf Board.

In response to the CDC notice, Yatnal stated that he would provide a prompt reply, insisting that his commitment to fighting corruption and advocating for Hindutva remains steadfast.

He claimed to have risen as a leader independently and challenged Yediyurappa to convene a meeting with BJP district presidents. —*PTI*

BJP will bring Waqf issue to an end: Ashoka

MYSURU, 2 DEC

Opposition leader in the State Assembly R Ashoka stated that BJP will take the ongoing Waqf agitation to a logical end.

Speaking to reporters after visiting two villages where farmers' lands have been notified as Waqf properties, he alleged that the State government was engaging in appeasement politics. The Mysuru district administration has issued notices to several farmers and residents of Gunduraonagar and Muneshwaranagar in Mysuru, marking their lands as Waqf properties. Notices have also been served to Basavanna Mutt and several other religious and educational institutions in Muneshwaranagar, designating them as Waqf properties.

He accused the State government of planning to rename Muneshwaranagar in Mysuru as "Mullanagar." He further said that BJP is committed to protecting the interests of farmers and safeguarding such properties.

He acknowledged that previous BJP government also issued notices to farmers on the same issue but never intimidated them in any way. He stated that under the current State government, led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, not only have notices been served to farmers through the Waqf Minister, Zameer Ahmed Khan, but the government has also taken steps to issue RTC (Record of Rights, Tenancy, and Crops) and other land record rights to the State Waqf Board. Further attacking the State government, he said the Siddharamiah government gave clean chit to the miscreants involved in DJ Halli and Hubballi riots, even also protected the people who raised Pakistan Zindabad slogans in state legislature, but filed FIR against Chandrashekharanatha Swamiji. —*Salar News*

R Ashoka **PHOTO: FB**

PEJAVAR MUTT SEER SAYS HIS REMARKS ON CONSTITUTION 'MISQUOTED' BY MEDIA

UDUPI, 2 DEC

A trustee of the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Theerth Kshetra Trust, Sri Vishwaprasanna Theertha Swamiji of Sri Pejavar Mutt, has clarified that his remarks on the Indian Constitution had been "misquoted" by the media.

He asserted that he never called for a change in the Constitution and reiterated his respect for its principles. Speaking to reporters at a press conference on Sunday, the seer expressed disappointment over what he called "misinformation" and said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's remarks on the issue had caused unnecessary confusion.

Controversy arose following his address at a 'Saints' Conference' organised by the Karnataka unit of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Bengaluru on 23 November, where he reportedly called for a constitution that honours the interests of the majority. He urged the media to verify statements and avoid spreading misinformation. The seer said, "I only demanded governments be inclusive and treat all citizens equally. Minority appeasement must stop."

He also alleged that certain groups are targeting him for supporting Hindu causes. —*PTI*

ACCIDENTS

3 women killed as bus collides with divider in Tumakuru

TUMAKURU 2 DEC

n a tragic incident early on Monday, three women, including a journalist from from a national news channel, lost their lives and several others sustained injuries when a bus collided with a divider on the Chikkanahalli flyover in Sira Taluk, according to police reports. The bus, operated by Sun Riser Travels, was carrying approximately 30 passengers and was en route from Goa to Bengaluru when the accident occurred at around 4:30 am on National Highway-48.

Emergency services reported that the three deceased women, identified as Shefali Singh, Urvi, and Priyanka, died at the scene. Those injured have been swiftly transported to a local hospital for treatment. —*PTI*

25-year-old man dies after being hit by tanker truck in B'luru

BENGALURU, 2 DEC

"A two-wheeler rider died after being struck by a fuel tanker truck near the Nayandahalli signal on Mysuru Road on Sunday night." The deceased Kiran Kumar, 25, was resident of Rajarajeshwari Nagar in the City. He was a native of Davanagered i s t r i c t and was working as a co-producer for a Kannada television serial. The incident took place around 8pm when Kumar was riding from RR Nagar Gate. A speeding tanker truck hit his scooter from behind throwing him off his vehicle. Kumar died after succumbing to severe head injuries while he was being transported to a nearby hospital. The Byatarayanapura police conducted an inspection and have registered a case. —*Salar News*

IPS officer killed in accident cleared UPSC in 1st attempt

BENGALURU, 2 DEC

IPS officer Harsh Bardhan, who died in a road accident on Sunday while on his way to take up his first posting, had cleared the civil services examination in his maiden attempt, sources close to his family said on Monday.

The accident occurred on Sunday evening when the tyre of the police vehicle carrying the IPS officer burst in Hassan taluk, resulting in the driver losing control at the wheel and the vehicle hitting a house and a tree, police said.

He was a 2023-batch IPS officer of the Karnataka cadre and hailed from Madhya Pradesh, police said.

Harsh Bardhan had cleared the civil services examination in his maiden attempt, family sources said.He had recently completed his four-week training at the Karnataka Police Academy in Mysuru, police said. Expressing condolences on Bardhan's death Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on X said, "It is deeply saddening that such an accident occurred as he was on his way to assume charge as an IPS officer." The Chief Minister prayed for the departed soul and extended condolences to the bereaved family. —*PTI*

DKS defends government's progress amid Oppn claims

BENGALURU, 2 DEC

After laying the foundation for several development projects in Tumakuru district about 70 km from Bengaluru city, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivkumar on Monday highlighted the government's focus on development alongside guarantee schemes, urging people not to be misled by opposition propaganda.

"Some are wrongly claiming that development is being affected by guarantee schemes. But with Rs 250 crore reaching each assembly constituency, isn't that progress? Isn't that women's empowerment?" he asked. He mentioned the inauguration of the Yettinahole project, acknowledging minor obstacles but assuring that efforts would be made to ensure water flows to the district soon. "Our government spends Rs 56,000 crore annually on these schemes, which have become a model for the country. Even BJP is adopting them in their states," he added.Shivkumar stressed the government's commitment to providing employment for every family, noting the party's long history of welfare initiatives since Indira Gandhi's time. He also expressed support for Home Minister Parameshwara's vision of Tumakuru as an alternative to Bengaluru —*Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

₹6.5cr prize challenge to empower 1M women

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Two Bengaluru -based companies, The Nudge Institute and Mphasis, have announced a 'Digital Naukri Challenge,' on Monday to create digital work opportunities for 1 million women by 2030.

With a prize purse of Rs 6.5 crore and a duration spanning 20 months, the challenge invites tech startups and innovators to unlock gainful employment opportunities for more women in India, said Deepa Nagraj, Senior Vice President & Global Head - ESG, Sparkle Innovation Ecosystem, and Communications, Mphasis.

The firms collaborated with Manthan, a government platform for innovation to promote collaborations at scale, a press release said. —*PTI*

2ND STADIUM IN STATE

Tumakuru gets new cricket stadium

TUMAKURU, 2 DEC

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah laid the foundation stone for an International Cricket Stadium in Tumakuru on Monday and allocated 50 acres of land to the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) for its construction. Siddaramaiah emphasised that the construction of the international cricket stadium in Tumakuru will significantly boost the development of the district.

Siddaramaiah urged officials to complete the stadium's construction at the earliest to fulfil the expectations of cricket enthusiasts in the region. He also mentioned that the KSCA has requested land for a cricket stadium in Mysuru as well, to which he assured and said "We will provide land in Mysuru too."

CM Siddharamaiah plays cricket in Tumakuru **PHOTO: X/@SIDDARAMAIAH**

Tumakuru, where the stadium is being constructed is around 60 km north of Bengaluru.

The state-of-the-art facility, estimated to cost Rs 150 crore, is expected to be completed within two years.

Currently, Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru is the sole venue to host all the international cricket matches in Karnataka. —*ANI*

M'rashtra BJP MLA meet: FM, Rupani to be observers

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

BJP on Monday named Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and former Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani as central observers for its Maharashtra legislature party's meeting, where the MLAs will elect their leader, who is likely to be the state's next chief minister. Maharashtra BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule has said that the oath-taking ceremony of the new Mahayuti government will take place on 5 December evening at the Azad Maidan in south Mumbai. The BJP MLAs will meet before the ceremony to elect their leader. Though the party has made no announcement, former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, the deputy chief minister in the outgoing government, is being seen as the frontrunner for the key position. —*PTI*

Woman BJP leader from Surat hangs self in house

SURAT, 2 DEC

A 34-year-old Gujarat BJP leader allegedly committed suicide in her house in Surat's Bhimrad area, a police official said on Monday. Dipika Patel, president of BJP women's wing in ward 30 of Surat city, was found hanging from the ceiling fan of her bedroom at around 2pm on Sunday, Deputy Commissioner of Police Vijaysinh Gurjar said. "No suicide note was found from the spot. Before taking the extreme step, she had called ward 30 corporator Chirag Solanki, whom she considered as a brother. Patel told Solanki she was in stress and wanted to end her life. Solanki rushed to Patel's house and broke open the door of her bedroom after there was no response from inside despite repeated knocks," he told reporters. —*PTI*

LDF to hold protest against Centre's Wayanad aid denial

T'PURAM, 2 DEC

Kerala's ruling CPI(M)-led LDF said it will stage a march and sit-in outside the Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram and at central government offices across the state on 5 December to protest the Centre's "refusal to provide vital aid to landslide-hit areas in Wayanad". In a statement on Monday, LDF Convener T P Ramakrishnan stated that everyone should come forward to make the march and sit-in a success. He accused the BJP-led Centre of showing discrimination towards Kerala. Earlier, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had accused the central government of continuing to turn a "blind eye" to the state's need for financial assistance for the rehabilitation of people affected by the devastating landslides in Wayanad in July this year. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

ED challenges AAP's Amanatullah's release in HC

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday moved the Delhi High Court against a trial court order refusing to take cognisance of a chargesheet filed against AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan and releasing him in a money laundering case related to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Waqf Board. Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri asked the ED to place before it the various orders passed by the trial court in the case. The trial court recently declined to take the cognisance of the alleged offence of money laundering under the Prevention of Money laundering Act against Khan, citing the lack of requisite sanction to prosecute him. The matter will come up on 13 January, 2025 for hearing. —*PTI*

Why survey Sambhal when plea sought access: Owaisi

Owaisi says such issues weaken the nation with many issues

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 2 DEC

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi has said if the petition over a Mughal-era mosque at Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh had prayed for the right to access, then why a court there ordered a survey of the structure.

Targeting the ruling BJP, Owaisi said such issues weaken the country, which is facing inflation, unemployment, farmer suicides and other issues.

On 19 November, a court of civil judge (senior division) of Sambhal passed an ex-parte order for a survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid by an advocate commissioner, after taking note of a plea of the Hindu side claiming the mosque was built by Mughal emperor Babur in 1526 after demolishing a temple.

Supreme Court on Friday ordered a Sambhal trial court to halt proceedings in the case over the Shahi Jama Masjid and its survey at Chandausi while directing the UP government to maintain peace and harmony in the violence-hit town.

Talking to reporters here on Sunday over the Sambhal incident, Owaisi said, "If we read the petition, we find the prayer in it is right to access. If this is so, why did the court order the survey, which is wrong. If they need access, who stops them from going and sitting in the mosque?"

Asaduddin Owaisi PHOTO: ANI

- Supreme Court on Friday ordered a Sambhal trial court to halt proceedings in the case over the Shahi Jama Masjid and its survey at Chandausi

"If according to the Places of Worship Act, the character and nature (of a religious place) can't be changed, then why still the survey was ordered?" the Hyderabad MP asked.

Notably, a court recently also admitted a petition seeking to declare the Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Rajasthan as a temple. —*PTI*

Scuffle breaks out as Cong denied Sambhal entry

LUCKNOW/SAMBHAL, 2 DEC

Scores of Congress workers jostled with police personnel and tried to scale barricades outside the party office here on Monday as a party delegation led by its Uttar Pradesh unit chief Ajay Rai was prevented from leaving for Sambhal, which has been made out of bounds by the administration after the December 24 violence.

A large police contingent had been deployed and barricades put up since Sunday night around the Congress office in Lucknow's Mall Avenue area to prevent Rai and others from leaving for Sambhal, which was hit by violence during protests against a court-ordered survey.

Congress hit out at the BJP government, saying it was trying to hide its failure with its "anti-democratic" actions. Rai, who had spent the night at the Congress office along with several party workers, later said the party delegation will visit Sambhal when prohibitory orders are lifted.

The party also said that the morale of its workers was intact even in the face of police action. —*PTI*

Uttar Pradesh Congress President Ajay Rai protests after police prevented the party delegation from entering Sambhal PHOTO: PTI

Mamata urges Centre on UN peacekeeping in Bangladesh

KOLKATA, 2 DEC

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has called on the Indian government to seek United Nations intervention for a peacekeeping mission in Bangladesh due to escalating violence against minority Hindus. During an assembly session, she urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene and ensure the safety of persecuted individuals from India and requested the External Affairs Minister to update Parliament on the situation in Bangladesh.

While acknowledging that addressing bilateral issues lies beyond her jurisdiction as a state leader, Banerjee expressed her concern over testimonies from individuals with ties to Bangladesh, including the recent detention of Indian fishermen. "We can rehabilitate those persecuted and are willing to share our resources," she stated, emphasising the need for communal harmony.

People take part in a protest organised by Vishva Hindu Parishad against atrocities on religious minorities in Bangladesh, in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

On the other hand, Suvendu Adhikari, Leader of the Opposition, threatened to impose an indefinite export embargo on Bangladesh unless the violence against minorities ceases. Addressing a protest at the Petrapole border, he announced a potential five-day trade suspension and vowed to escalate actions if the situation does not improve.

Adhikari, alongside other BJP leaders, highlighted the severity of the crisis, indicating that their movement is aimed at rallying Hindu communities across political lines. —*PTI*

Akal Takht assigns Sukhbir toilet cleaning duty

CHANDIGARH, 2 DEC

Sukhbir Badal, the leader of the Shiromani Akali Dal and deputy chief minister of Punjab, has been given a symbolic penance by the Akal Takht over a controversial sacrilege case.

The religious body assigned him the task of cleaning toilets, a form of punishment often used in Sikh traditions to atone for misconduct.

This action stems from an incident involving an alleged desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib, which has led to ongoing tensions. The decision highlights the Akal Takht's commitment to upholding Sikh values and addressing such violations within the community.

Earlier on Monday, the five high priests of the Sikhs -- led by Akal Takht jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh -- announced the quantum of 'tankhah (religious punishment for misconduct)'. —*PTI*

BJP's Raja gets 6-month jail for remarks on Kani, Periyar

CHENNAI, 2 DEC

A special court here on Monday convicted and sentenced senior BJP leader H Raja in two cases, one relating to making remarks against DMK MP Kanimozhi and the other about demolishing Periyar statues in the state, a few years ago.

The Special Court for trial of criminal cases related to MPs/MLAs sentenced the BJP National Secretary to six months' simple imprisonment in both cases and imposed a total fine amount of Rs 5,000. The court suspended the sentence for 30 days to enable him to file an appeal against the order.

Raja said his team of advocates will face the matter legally. The judge sentenced Raja to six months' simple imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 3000.

Similarly, in the other case pertaining to his social media comments against Kanimozhi, daughter of former chief minister, the late M Karunanidhi, court found Raja guilty. —*PTI*

SC seeks EC's clarity on enhanced voter limit

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Supreme Court on Monday sought the Election Commission's response on a PIL challenging its decision to increase the maximum number of voters from 1,200 to 1,500 at every polling station, saying no elector should be excluded.

While asking the poll panel to clarify its stand, a bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said, "We are concerned. No voter should be excluded."

The bench therefore directed senior advocate Maninder Singh, representing the poll panel, to file a short affidavit explaining the rationale behind the decision to increase the number of voters per polling station.

"Senior advocate Maninder Singh, appearing for the Election Commission, says on instruction that they will explain the position by way of a short affidavit. Let the affidavit be filed within a period of three weeks."

Singh said the bench knew about the consistent allegations on EVMs, adding, "They will keep on coming.

PHOTO: PTI

The polling has been happening like this since 2019 and political parties are being consulted before this in every constituency."

The bench, which will hear the matter on 27 January, 2025, asked the EC to provide a copy of its affidavit to the petitioner before the next date of hearing.

The PIL, filed by Indu Prakash Singh, challenged two communications issued by the EC in August, increasing the number of voters per polling station in each constituency across India.

The plea said the decision to increase the number of voters per polling booth was arbitrary and not based on any data. — *PTI*

'ARE WE RABBITS?'

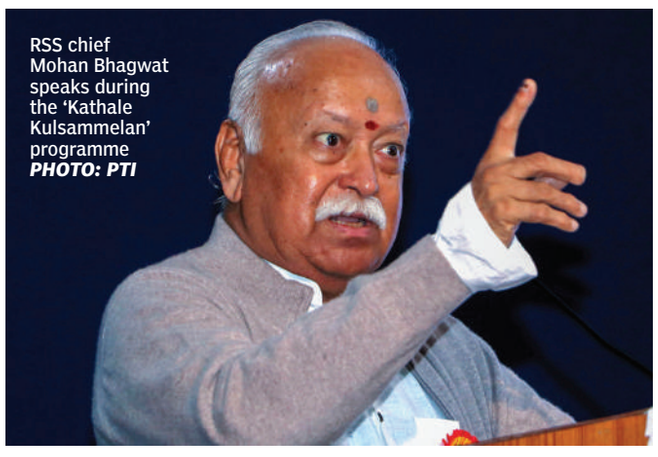
Bhagwat's population remarks fuel debate

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

A day after Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat expressed concern over India's declining fertility rate, BJP leaders on Monday welcomed his remarks, while the opposition asked from where the resources to support an increased population will come from.

Speaking at an event in Nagpur on Sunday, Bhagwat highlighted the vital role of families and warned that according to population science, if a society's total fertility rate dips below 2.1, it could face extinction.

"So when we say 2.1, this means it should be more, at least three. The (population) science says so," Bhagwat said and described the declining population growth as a "serious concern".



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat speaks during the 'Kathale Kulsammelan' programme PHOTO: PTI

Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury pointed to unemployment and said no one is ready to marry off their daughters to jobless men. She also asked, "Are we rabbits that we will keep reproducing?"

Asked about Bhagwat's remarks, BJP leader Manoj Tiwari said they are in national interest. "The RSS is a patriotic organisation. If Mohan Bhagwat ji has said something, then it would certainly be in the national interest. So it should be analysed positively," he said.

BJP MP from Meerut Arun Govil, "His ideas are in the national interest. He is a mature person, if he has given this statement, it is for the good of the country and it must be right."

Opposition leaders, however, questioned Bhagwat over his remarks.

Bhupesh Baghel hit out at Bhagwat's remark and said that, "People are not getting employment, education, health care facilities. What is the purpose of giving birth to more children? The people who are unmarried in RSS should be told to get married first." —*PTI*

Treat Muslims as equals: Abdullah to Centre

SRINAGAR, 2 DEC

National Conference President Farooq Abdullah on Monday said the Centre should put a stop to activities that can spark communal tension in the country, and treat Muslims as equals.

"There is a need to stop (incidents like Sambhal). I will tell the government of India to stop (such acts) because they cannot throw the Muslims (of India) into the sea. Where will they throw 24 crore Muslims? Treat Muslims as equals. That is what our Constitution stands for. If they fiddle with the Constitution, how will India survive?" Abdullah asked in Srinagar.

The National Conference (NC) president, who recently performed Umrah (minor Hajj pilgrimage) along with his son and chief minister Omar Abdullah and several of his colleagues, said no one was

Farooq Abdullah PHOTO: PTI

against the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley.

"Who is stopping Kashmiri Pandits from coming back? Every political party has said they should return. It is their decision when they want to return. Our hearts are open for them. Even when I was the chief minister, when the situation was bad, we tried to bring them back," he said.

On demands seeking review of the reservation policy in Jammu and Kashmir, Abdullah said the government should review the same. "We will tell the government to review it", he said. —*PTI*

AMID DIN

Coastal Shipping Bill tabled in LS

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

A Bill that seeks to promote coastal trade and encourage the participation of Indian-flagged vessels owned and operated by Indian citizens for national security and commercial needs was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways minister Sarbananda Sonowal introduced the Bill amid noisy protests by opposition members over the recent violence in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal and the Adani issue.

The Bill seeks prohibition of trade in the coastal water without licence by vessels other than Indian vessels and permitting Inland vessels to engage in coastal trading subject to certain conditions.

According to the Bill, no licenCe granted shall be suspended, revoked or modified, unless the licence has been given a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

Coastal shipping in India holds great potential owing to vast coastline of around 7,500 km and proximity to important global shipping routes. It has been recognised that maritime transportation, particularly coastal shipping is cheaper compared to other modes of transportation.

Bill is among the five new measures planned for introduction in Lok Sabha. —*PTI*

Parl impasse: Congress targets treasury benches

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Congress on Monday alleged the government does not want Parliament to function as it is "running away" from a discussion on issues such as Adani indictment, Sambhal violence and Manipur unrest.

Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned amid continued protests by the opposition, which demanded a discussion on the indictment of industrialist Gautam Adani in a US court on bribery charges and the Sambhal violence.

Congress general secretary in-charge, communications, Jairam Ramesh said, "Today too both Houses got adjourned. INDIA parties had given notices for an immediate discussion on Adani, Manipur, Sambhal and Ajmer. There was hardly any sloganeering. But the Modi government simply did not want to function."

Congress said that the fall in the GDP numbers for the last quarter highlights the "unimpressive" manufacturing growth and the failure of 'Make in India' which, it claimed, has become 'Make-believe in India'. — *PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others during the screening of 'Sabarmati Report', at the Parliament in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

PM WATCHES 'SABARMATI REPORT' AFTER VIKRANT ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

In a rare instance of an actor announcing that he's taking a break from films, "12th Fail" star Vikrant Massey on Monday announced that it was time for him to "recalibrate" and go back home.

The dramatic announcement came shortly before the actor attended a special screening of his latest film "The Sabarmati Report" with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other ministers at the Balyogi Auditorium in the Parliament Library Building.

At the Delhi screening of "The Sabarmati Express", Massey told reporters that watching the film with the PM and other ministers was an experience that cannot be described in words. Massey's announcement has come as a shock with many of his fans asking whether the break is temporary or permanent. —*PTI*

2 cops cling on to SUV as couple speeds away

AHMEDABAD, 2 DEC

A couple sped off in their SUV during a combing drive with a constable perched precariously on the vehicle's bonnet and another policeman clinging on to its window in Ahmedabad, an official said. The constable who was on the bonnet suffered injuries as he got dragged for some distance before falling due to the SUV's speed and narrowly escaped being run over by a dumper, the official said on Sunday. The other policeman was also thrown off as the vehicle speeded up late Saturday night, he said. Instead of stopping, the SUV driver continued to move the vehicle allegedly with an intention to run over the policemen when they tried to stop the vehicle, the official said. Police later arrested the man and his wife after tracing them based on registration number noted by cops.—*PTI*

PHOTO: XXX

Brother allegedly kills woman cop in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 2 DEC

A woman constable was found allegedly murdered by her brother on Monday, police said. The incident happened when the woman working at Hayathnagar police station was on her way to duty on a two-wheeler, a police official at Ibrahimpatnam police station said. The accused, who was in a vehicle, hit the woman's two-wheeler and later slit her throat with a knife, the official said. The woman recently had a love marriage and her brother is suspected of having killed her, police said, —*PTI*

Mumbai road rage: 15 jawans booked for assaulting doc

MUMBAI, 2 DEC

Police have registered a case against 10 to 15 CISF personnel for allegedly assaulting a doctor, his brother and another people in a road rage incident in Maharashtra's Navi Mumbai, officials said on Monday. The accused personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) have been issued notices in the incident which took place at 10.15pm on 29 November, they said. Some buses were ferrying the CISF personnel to their quarters in Navi Mumbai's Kharghar area from Mumbai airport. While moving towards Sector 36 in Kharghar, a speeding bus came dangerously close to a car between Utsav Chowk and Central Park, an official said. The car owner, who is a doctor, chased the bus and asked its driver to stop the vehicle, he said. The car owner objected to the bus driver's rash driving following which an argument broke out. By the time, five-six CISF personal stepped out of the bus, confronted the doctor and allegedly assaulted him, the official said. —*PTI*

Stone pelters target train near Bareilly

BAREILLY, 2 DEC

Unidentified people pelted stones at the Kashi Vishwanath Express at Dhaneta Halt, near Fatehganj West, and damaged the window of a coach but no injuries were reported, an official said on Monday. According to the station in-charge of Bareilly Railway Police Force, Ajit Pratap Singh, the incident took place on Saturday, when the train was going from Delhi to Varanasi. When the train reached Dhaneta Halt, some people started throwing stones at it, causing a window of coach B-1 to crack, Singh said. An FIR has been filed in Rampur. The RPF has launched a search operation in villages along the railway line, from Bareilly Junction to Chandausi, Moradabad, and Shahjahanpur to identify and apprehend the stone pelters, Singh said. —*PTI*

Flooded Pandiyan Nagar area following heavy rainfall in the aftermath of Cyclone Fengal, in Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu on Monday; Vehicles get swept away in flooded Uthangarai area in Krishnagiri PHOTOS: PTI

4 dead as rains due to Fengal paralyse Puducherry

All schools, colleges remained shut in the Union Territory

PUDUCHERRY, 2 DEC

The effects of cyclone Fengal have been devastating after the storm made landfall, causing extremely heavy rainfall in coastal regions of north Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy has said that a detailed report was being prepared assessing the extent of damage caused by Fengal and will be sent to the Centre seeking relief.

All schools and colleges remained closed in Puducherry and Karaikal regions on Monday, Puducherry Home Minister A Namassivayam said.

After making landfall near Puducherry on November 30, Cyclone Fengal weakened on Sunday, but torrential downpour under its influence paralysed the Union Territory, with the Army stepping in to evacuate stranded persons in inundated streets.

Four people died in rain-related incidents.

Power supply which remained suspended for the whole region was restored in a phased manner on Monday. Some of the sub stations of the electricity department were water logged and immediate steps were taken to pump out the water, officials said.

Venkata Nagar, Kamaraj Nagar, Vallalar Salai, Kamarajar Salai and a number of residential colonies were water logged and residents stayed indoors, they said.

Meanwhile, Puducherry district Collector A Kulothungan on Monday said that the Union Territory recorded the heaviest rainfall and this was the first time that such a heavy downpour was recorded during the last 50 years in Puducherry.

Relief camps were opened and people marooned in the flood were shifted to the camps where food packets were given, he said in a release.—*Agencies*

RED ALERT ON FOR KERALA

T'PURAM, 2 DEC

India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday issued a warning of rainfall in Kerala due to cyclone Fengal.

The system is expected to intensify as it moves towards the Arabian Sea, passing over northern Kerala and Karnataka by 3 December, the IMD said.

On Tuesday, heavy to very heavy rain is anticipated in the northern and central parts of the state.

Intermittent light to moderate rain with occasional thunderstorms is expected to persist over the next five days, IMD said.

Red alerts have been issued for five northern districts—Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, and Malappuram—on Monday. Palakkad, Thrissur, Idukki, and Ernakulam districts are under an orange alert, while Kottayam, Alappuzha, and Pathanamthitta are on a yellow alert.

The district administration in Kasaragod has declared a holiday for all educational institutions, including professional colleges, tuition centres, anganwadis, and madrasas, on Tuesday. However, model residential schools will remain open, the administration clarified.

In light of the heavy rainfall in Pathanamthitta and Idukki districts, authorities have issued orders prohibiting Sabarimala pilgrims from entering rivers or using bathing ghats and have imposed a ban on pilgrim travel through the forest route via Sathram to the hill shrine. —*PTI*

Landslides on Salem-Yerchad main road due to incessant rains in Tamil Nadu on Monday PHOTO: PTI

5 dead as boulder crushes TN building

THIRUVANNAMALAI, 2 DEC

Five bodies, trapped in a house buried under mud and rocks, following torrential rain on 1 December, were recovered from Annamalaiyar Hill following a hectic search since Monday morning.

The rescuers which included several teams from the NDRF, police, and fire service personnel recovered body of a child on Monday and following this four other bodies were located and recovered, police said. The hill area was rocked by four mud slips since the night of 1 December owing to the impact of Cyclone Fengal. A boulder had fallen on the house. A woman was among those killed. A search is on for two more people. —*PTI*

Farmers sit on a road after they were stopped by police during their protest march towards Delhi in Noida on Monday PHOTO: PTI

SC to farmers: Don't let stir disturb people

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

The Supreme Court on Monday asked Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri border point to press for the acceptance of farmers' demands, to persuade the protesting farmers not to obstruct highways and cause inconvenience to people.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan disposed of a habeas corpus petition filed on behalf of Dallewal, who was removed from the Khanauri protest site on the Punjab-Haryana border on 26 November.

"We have seen that he has been released and he even persuaded a fellow protestor to end his fast-unto-death protest on Saturday," the bench said, adding that the issue raised by the farmers has been noted by the court and is considered in a pending matter.

"In a democratic setup, you can engage in peaceful protests but do not cause inconvenience to people. You all know that the Khanauri border is a lifeline for Punjab. We are not commenting on whether the protest is right or wrong," the bench told advocate Guninder Kaur Gill, appearing on behalf of Dallewal.

Justice Kant said that Dallewal could persuade the protestors to organise peaceful protests under the law and without causing any inconvenience to people.

The bench said that at this stage, it was not entertaining Dallewal's petition but he could approach later.

Hours before beginning his fast-unto-death on 26 November, Dallewal was allegedly forcibly removed from the Khanauri border and taken to a hospital in Ludhiana. He was discharged on Friday evening.

SC not to relax GRAP-4 unless AQI dips in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Supreme Court on Monday refused to relax emergency measures under Stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) dealing with air pollution in the national capital till it noticed a downward trend in the AQI level.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih further sought the presence of the chief secretaries of NCR states to appear through video-conferencing to inform it whether or not any compensation was paid to the construction workers who were without work owing to the restrictions.

Notably, there has to be a downward trend before the Supreme Court relaxes GRAP 4 restrictions.

The bench said the chief secretaries of NCR states including Delhi, Haryana, UP and Rajasthan will have to appear through video-conferencing at 3.30pm on 5 December. "There is hardly any implementation of stage 4 of GRAP to deal with air pollution in the national capital," remarked the bench, questioning the Delhi government. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

'Minister Balaji' can influence witnesses: SC

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Expressing its concern over the appointment of DMK leader V Senthil Balaji as a minister in the Tamil Nadu government days after he was granted bail in the money laundering case related to the cash-for-job scam, the Supreme Court on Monday agreed to examine a plea raising apprehensions on the independence of witnesses in the case.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih, however, refused to interfere with the 26 September order of the apex court granting bail to Balaji on a plea filed by one of the complainants seeking its cancellation.

"We granted you bail, and days after you become a minister. Anybody will be bound to

PHOTO: X

be under the impression that now, with your position as a senior cabinet minister, witnesses will be under pressure. What is this going on?" the bench asked senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, who appeared for Balaji.

The bench, however, said it would not recall the 26 September order as the law laid down by the apex court was benefitting several other persons. —*PTI*

HC raps CID for lapses in Badlapur encounter probe

MUMBAI, 2 DEC

Bombay High Court on Monday came down heavily on the state Crime Investigation Department (CID) for taking "lightly" the probe into the killing of Badlapur school sexual assault case accused in a shootout.

Stressing the need for a fair investigation in all cases, a division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan said the conduct of the CID in the present case raises doubt and a wrong inference that it does not want to provide all information to the magistrate conducting inquiry into the shootout. —*PTI*

Navy to get 26 Rafale-Ms soon

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

India is expected to sign separate contracts for the procurement of 26 naval-variant Rafale-M fighter jets and three additional Scorpene submarines next month, Navy Chief Admiral DK Tripathi said on Monday as he asserted that activities of the navies of China and Pakistan are being closely monitored.

At a media briefing, Admiral Tripathi also said the government has accorded approval for building two SSNs (nuclear-powered submarines) and that the plan is to have a total of six such boats. The Navy chief said the first SSN should be ready by 2036–37 and the second one in 2038–39.

"Rafale Marine is at an advanced stage of negotiations and it is only one level short of taking it to the Cabinet Committee on Security. Since it is a government-to-government deal, it should not take much time," he said. In July last year, the defence ministry approved the purchase of the Rafale-M jets from France, primarily for deployment on board the indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant. "We expect that if not this month, then next month hopefully, both these (Scorpene submarine) and Rafale-M (project) should be signed," he said.

The Navy chief also said that 62 ships and one submarine are currently under construction within the country as part of efforts to boost its naval power. —*PTI*

TRADEMARK CASE

HC stops eatery from using Burger King name

MUMBAI, 2 DEC

The Bombay High Court, in an interim order on Monday, restrained a Pune-based eatery from using the name Burger King until a trademark infringement plea by Burger King Corporation is heard and disposed of.

The company in August challenged in the high court an order passed by a Pune court the same month, dismissing its suit alleging trademark infringement against the namesake eatery.

The Burger King Corporation had also filed an application in the HC, seeking an interim injunction against the Pune eatery owners Anahita Irani and Shapoor Irani from using the name Burger King pending hearing and final disposal of its appeal.

The HC in August extended the ad-interim order granted by the Pune court in January 2012, restraining the eatery from using the name Burger King.

- The Burger King Corporation had also filed an application in the HC, seeking an interim injunction against the Pune eatery owners Anahita Irani and Shapoor Irani

The HC had then started hearing the company's interim application seeking interim injunction against the Pune-based eatery pending final hearing of its appeal.

A division bench of Justices AS Chandurkar and Rajesh Patil on Monday, while passing its order on the interim application, said the appeal filed by the company needs to be heard and the entire evidence needs to be looked into.

"Until then the interim order – restraining the Pune-based eatery from using the name Burger King – is required to be continued," the HC said.

The bench expedited hearing into the appeal and directed both the appellant (Burger King) and the defendant (Pune-based eatery) to maintain their financial transaction records and tax documents of the last 10 years until disposal of the appeal. —*PTI*

Relief for 60 Indian fliers stranded at Kuwait airport

KUWAIT CITY, 2 DEC

Several Indian passengers of a Manchester-bound Gulf Air flight were stranded at the Kuwait airport for nearly 20 hours and flown out of the city to their destination on Monday morning. The flight from Bahrain was diverted to Kuwait because of a technical glitch.

Gulf Air GF5 took off from Bahrain at 2.05am local time on December 1 but a snag forced the plane to land in Kuwait at 4.01am, reports said.With several passengers complaining that they had been stranded at the airport for many hours, the Indian embassy in Kuwait took up the matter with Gulf Air, said social media posts.

In a posts on X, the embassy said its team reached the airport to assist the passengers and coordinate with the airline. Passengers were accommodated in two airport lounges. Reports said around 60 passengers were stranded, but there was no confirmation on the number from the airline.

'Bypass' exit at Delhi airport for delayed flights

Delhi airport set up special enclosures to accommodate passengers who have disembarked from flights that have been delayed for over three hours on Monday to allow their quicker return to the terminal to board their respective flights. The airport also arranged to bypass the normal process for security check-ins and allowed the process to be done separately. —*PTI*

PANDA GO!

A panda mascot poses for photographs in front of the panda sculptures displayed at the Hong Kong International Airport during the welcome ceremony of the panda-themed exhibition Panda Go!in Hong Kong, on Monday
PHOTO: PTI

Is secularism in Bangladesh under threat?

Religious tensions are high in Bangladesh following violence over the arrest of a Hindu religious leader in the southern city of Chittagong.

After Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das was denied bail on charges of sedition on Tuesday for allegedly insulting Bangladesh's flag during a rally in October, police said hundreds of his supporters clashed with security forces as a van took Das back to jail. A Muslim lawyer, Saiful Islam Alif, was killed during the clash, officials said.

After the incident, some Muslim groups have suggested cracking down on the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), an international Hindu organization.

Although Bangladesh ISKCON said on 28 November that religious leader Das was expelled from the organization in July for disciplinary issues, ISKCON's Bangladesh president, Satya Ranjan Barai, told the AFP news agency on Friday that Das "defied the order and continued his activities."

Nevertheless, both Bangladesh ISKCON and Global ISKCON also issued statements condemning the arrest.

Religious relations have been turbulent in Muslim-majority Bangladesh since the government of Sheikh Hasina was toppled after student-led protests in August. She fled to India after the protests.

An interim government has taken over and is in charge of setting up policies to be eventually adopted by a new government.

Various Islamist political parties, including the far-right Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh, called for a ban on ISKCON in Bangladesh.

On 26 November, Hasnat Abdullah, an organiser of the student-led uprising that toppled Hasina, posted on social media calling ISKCON an "extremist" group "trying to implement various treasonous plots to destabilise"

Various Islamist political parties, including the Far-Right Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh, called for a ban on ISKCON in Bangladesh
PHOTO: PTI

Bangladesh. The group responded in a post on X: "It is outrageous to make baseless allegations that ISKCON has anything to do with terrorism anywhere in the world."

A lawyer brought the issue of banning ISKCON as a militant organisation to the Supreme Court on 27 November. A day later, the top court dismissed the petition calling for a ban.

"Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians... believe in coexistence, and this harmony will not be broken," the court ruled.

Shafiqul Alam, press secretary of Bangladesh's chief adviser, said that the interim government "believes in freedom of religion, freedom of association, freedom of assembly for every religious institution. We also believe in ensuring all rights."

He acknowledged that some incidents of attacks on religious minorities might have occurred immediately after Hasina was ousted but added that most of the events described in the Indian media have been exaggerated.

Since the interim government took over, the Indian government has consistently raised concerns about the security of Hindus in Bangladesh. India's Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement expressing concern even after the arrest of Hindu leader Das. This has led to speculation in Bangladesh over whether India's Hindu nationalist government is using the minority issue to pressure Bangladesh's interim government.

Manindra Kumar Nath, president of the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, a non-profit advocating for religious minorities, said that the minority movement in Bangladesh is independent of India and Hasina's Awami League. "The demand for a minority protection act and a minority commission, etc. has existed for a long time," he said. Nath added that Hindu students were among those who participated in the protest movement to remove Hasina's government. "They came together to protest against the non-fulfilment of long-standing demands of the minorities," he said. The current constitution of Bangladesh designates Islam as the state religion while also upholding secularism as a state principle. However, Bangladesh's Attorney General, Md Asaduzzaman, said during a High Court hearing in October that he would support excluding secularism from the constitution. Nath said removing secularism from the constitution would further restrict the rights of minorities."If the Hindu minority has any concerns about the constitution, they will express them," he said. "If the people in the (Chittagong) Hill Tracts feel their rights are being violated, they can voice their concerns. This is how we want to go forward," Alam said. *—DW News*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈھ

Depression may worsen menstrual pain: Study

Depression could be a cause rather than an effect of menstrual pain, according to a team of researchers from China and the UK, who explored links between mental and reproductive health.

The study, published in the journal Briefings in Bioinformatics, found that depression can increase the likelihood of experiencing menstrual pain by up to 50 per cent.

"We used a specialised technique called Mendelian randomisation to analyse genetic variation and identify specific genes that may mediate (explain) the effect of depression on menstrual pain," said lead author Shuhe Liu, a PhD student at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China.

This technique examines genes to understand whether a particular risk factor can cause a given outcome. It provides more reliable evidence compared to observational studies, which cannot prove cause-and-effect links, according to a 2018 article published in the British Medical Journal by researchers at the Universities of Oxford and Bristol, UK.

Liu added, "Our findings provide preliminary evidence that depression may be a cause, rather than a consequence, of dysmenorrhoea (menstrual pain), as we did not find evidence that period pain increased the risk of depression."

The researchers specifically looked at disturbed sleep -- a common symptom of depression -- and found that it was a "significant mediator," or 'middleman', explaining the relationship between depression and period pain.

Approximately 6,00,000 cases from European populations and 8,000 from East Asian populations were analysed.

Mental disorders are often not considered when treating conditions such as period pain
PHOTO: PIXABABY

- Researchers looked at disturbed sleep -- a common symptom of depression -- and found that it was a "significant mediator," explaining the relationship between depression and period pain

The findings confirmed a significant causal effect of depression on dysmenorrhoea (by up to 50 per cent).

"Conversely, no evidence was found to support a causal effect of dysmenorrhoea on depression," the authors wrote.

"We found that increased sleep disturbances could exacerbate menstrual pain. Addressing sleep issues may, therefore, be crucial in managing both conditions. However, more research is required to understand the intricate links between these factors," Liu said.

The researchers emphasised that the study highlighted the need for a holistic approach when treating mental health and reproductive issues among women, who are twice as likely to suffer from depression -- the second most common cause of health-related issues for women.

"Mental disorders are often not considered when treating conditions such as period pain. Our findings emphasise the importance of mental health screening for those who suffer from severe menstrual pain. We hope this can lead to more personalised treatment options, improve healthcare, and reduce the stigma surrounding these conditions," Liu said.

"Our results provide evidence of a link between our neurological systems and the rest of the body. By exploring and understanding these relationships better, we can make a real difference to the millions of people experiencing period pain and mental health issues," the lead author said. *—PTI*

The study highlighted the need for a holistic approach when treating mental health and reproductive issues among women, who are twice as likely to suffer from depression
PHOTO: PIXABAY

Biden's Africa trip aims to counter China's growing influence

US President Joe Biden is finally making his long-promised visit to Africa this week, attempting to showcase a US-backed railway project in three countries that he has pushed as a new approach in countering some of China's global influence.

Biden's first visit to the continent as president — which he left to the very end — will highlight the Lobito Corridor railway redevelopment in Zambia, Congo and Angola. It aims to advance US presence in a region rich in the critical minerals used in batteries for electric vehicles, electronic devices and clean energy technologies.

That's a key field for US-China competition and China has a stranglehold on Africa's critical minerals.

The US has for years built relations in Africa through trade, security and humanitarian aid. The 1,300km, USD 2.5 billion railway upgrade is a different move and has shades of China's Belt and Road foreign infrastructure strategy that has surged ahead.

The Biden administration has called the corridor one of the president's signature initiatives.

Biden started a three-day trip to Angola on Monday, yet Lobito's future and any change in the way the United States engages with a continent of 1.4 billion leaning heavily toward China depends on the incoming administration of Donald Trump.

"President Biden is no longer the story," said Mvemba Dizolele, the director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank. "Even African leaders are focused on Donald Trump."

The US has committed hundreds of millions of dollars to the Lobito Corridor alongside financing from the European Union, the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations, a Western-led private consortium and African banks.

"A lot is riding on this in terms of its success and its replicability," said Tom Sheehy, a fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, a nonpartisan federal research institution.

He called it one of the flagships for the G7's new Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, which was driven by Biden and aims to reach other developing nations as a response to China's Belt and Road.

Biden promised to visit Africa last year after reviving the US-Africa Summit for the first time in nearly a decade in December 2022. The trip was kicked back to 2024 and delayed again this October because of Hurricane Milton, reinforcing a sentiment among Africans that their continent is still low priority. The last US president to visit was Barack Obama in 2015.

Amid US President Joe Biden's visit to Angola, Donald Trump administration should anticipate the need for US engagement in Africa in response to China's continued influence on the continent
PHOTO: X/ @POTUS

"Africa never gets top attention," said Witney Schniedman, an expert on African economic growth at the nonprofit Brookings Institution.

"As long as they keep labeling Lobito one of the main anti-China tools in Africa, there is a certain likelihood that it's going to keep being funded," said Christian-Géraud Neema, who analyzes China-Africa relations.

The Lobito Corridor will be an upgrade and extension of a railway line from the copper and cobalt mines of northern Zambia and southern Congo to Angola's Atlantic Ocean port of Lobito, a route west for Africa's critical minerals.

It's little more than a starting point for the US and its partners, because China is dominant in the mining in Zambia and Congo. Congo has more than 70 per cent of the world's cobalt, most of which is heading to China to reinforce its critical mineral supply chain that the US and Europe have to rely on.

Lobito was made possible by some American diplomatic success in Angola that led to a Western consortium winning the bid for the project in 2022 ahead of Chinese competition, a surprise given Angola's long and strong ties with Beijing. China financed a previous redevelopment of the railway.

The Biden administration accelerated American outreach to Angola, turning around what was an antagonistic relationship three decades ago when the U.S. armed anti-government rebels in Angola's civil war. In Angola, Biden will announce new developments on health, agribusiness, security cooperation as well as the Lobito Corridor, White House officials said on a preview call with reporters.

The visit, the first by a sitting US president to Angola, will "highlight that remarkable evolution of the US-Angola relationship," Frances Brown, a special assistant to the president and senior director for African affairs at the National Security Council, said on a separate call.

It will also draw attention to a perennial challenge for America's value-based diplomacy in Africa. International rights groups have used Biden's trip to criticize the Lourenço government's authoritarian shift. Political opponents have been imprisoned and allegedly tortured, while security and other laws have been passed in Angola that severely restrict freedoms, throwing some scrutiny on Washington's new African partnership.

Those calling for more US presence in Africa say Angola and the Lobito spinoff show what might be achieved, even with China-facing countries, if the US is willing to consistently engage. But they see signs for Africa when China has held a summit with African leaders every three years since 2000, while the US has had just two summits, in 2014 and 2022, and there are no plans for the next one. Michelle Gavin, a former US ambassador to Botswana and adviser on Africa to Obama, said that the US had failed to take Africa seriously over multiple administrations, a bipartisan trend. She doesn't see Biden's visit and Lobito being a major "inflection point" that will drive a new US focus across Africa. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Nepal accepts $20M in Chinese grant assistance

KATHMANDU, 2 DEC

The Nepal government has accepted projects worth USD 20 million as grant assistance from China ahead of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's first official visit to the country after assuming office for the fourth time. Minister for Information and Communication Prithvi Subba Gurung talking to media persons on Sunday said the Council of Ministers meeting wished for the success of the prime minister's China visit and also decided to accept projects worth USD 20 million equivalent to Nepalese Rs 2.70 billion as grant assistance from China. Besides, the Cabinet also decided to accept 300 million Chinese Yuan (USD 4.13 million approximately) equivalent to Nepalese Rs 5.60 billion worth projects proposed by the government of China. *—PTI*

Impeachment plaint filed against Philippine VP

MANILA, 2 DEC

An impeachment complaint was filed Monday against Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte, who is fac-ing a legal storm over a death threat she made against the president, the alleged misuse of government funds by her office and other criminal accusations. The impeachment bid filed by several prominent op-ponents and activists in the House of Representatives accuses Duterte of violating the country's Consti-tution, massive corruption and other "high crimes," includ-ing the death threats she made against the president, his wife and the speaker of the House of Representatives. The Vice Presdient said on 23 November that she has contracted an assassin to kill Marcos, his wife and Speaker Martin Romualdez. *—PTI*

Romania's ruling party set to win in general elections

BUCHAREST, 2 DEC

Romania's governing left-wing party is set to keep its majority in parliament following general elections, but will face off against a resurgent far-right opposition with an increased number of seats. Incomplete election results on Sunday showed the governing Social Democratic Party (SDP) with 24 per-cent of the vote and the hard-right Alliance for Uniting Romanians with about 18 percent. The National Liberal Party, a Christian democratic party and member of the SDP's governing coalition, had 14 percent of the vote, and the reformist Save Romania Union was on 10 percent. The election is on track to have the highest voter turnout in 20 years. *—Al Jazeera*

8 dead, 2 injured in mass shooting in Mexico

MEXICO CITY, 2 DEC

Eight people are dead and two others are wounded after gunmen pulled up to a roadside stand in north-central Mexico and opened fire on customers and bystanders, authorities reported Sunday. Prosecutors in the cartel-ravaged state of Guanajuato said the shooting occurred late Saturday in the town of Apaseo el Grande. Eight men died just outside the stand, which was selling a traditional type of milk-based fudge. Another man and a woman were wounded in the attack, but there was no immediate report on their condition. Media reported that a paramedic was one of those killed in the shooting. State ambulance and paramedics said an emergency medical technician had died late Saturday, but did not confirm whether he was one of those killed in the attack. *—PTI*

56 dead in stampede at Guinea football match

Demonstrators also set fire to the N'Zerekore police station

CONAKRY, 2 DEC

At least 56 people have been killed after violent clashes during a football match led to a stampede in Guinea's second-largest city of N'Zerekore, according to the government.

"Protests of dissatisfaction with refereeing decisions led to stone-throwing by supporters, resulting in fatal stampedes" at Sunday's match, the government statement said on Monday, published as a news ticker on national television.

The violence broke out during a match on Sunday afternoon in N'Zerekore, home to 200,000 people, where rival fans stormed the field following a controversial referee decision, news site Guineenews reported.

Earlier, health officials quoted by the AFP news agency put the death toll in the dozens.

"There are bodies lined up as far as the eye can see in the hospital," said the doctor. "Others are lying on the floor in the hallways. The morgue is full."

violence broke out during a match in N'Zerekore, where rival fans stormed the field following a controversial referee decision *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Guinea's Prime Minister Bah Oury condemned the violence and urged calm in a statement posted on X on Sunday. He said the government would issue a release once it gathered all the information.

The clashes began after supporters of the visiting team, Labe, hurled stones at the pitch in anger over a referee call, prompting the police to deploy tear gas, according to local news site Mediaguinee.

Later, angry demonstrators also vandalised and set fire to the N'Zerekore police station, Guineenews reported.

"It all started with a contested decision by the referee. Then fans invaded the pitch," a witness told AFP.

According to Mediaguinee, the match was part of a tournament organised in honour of Guinea's military leader, Mamady Doumbouya, who seized power in a 2021 coup and has installed himself as president.

Such tournaments have become common in the West African nation as Doumbouya eyes a potential run in the presidential election likely next year. Guinea's National Alliance for Alternation and Democracy (ANAD), a coalition of opposition parties, blasted the tournament, calling it an attempt to advance Doumbouya's "illegal and inappropriate candi-dacy".

The military leader "exceptionally" promoted himself to the rank of lieutenant general in January and last month elevated himself to the rank of army general.

Doumbouya is one of several officers who have seized power in West Africa since 2020, along with mili-tary leaders in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. *—A Jazeera*

Ceasefire reached in Pak's Kurram after violence

PESHAWAR, 2 DEC

A ceasefire agreement has been reached between two warring tribes in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakh-tunkhwa province following days of clashes between them that killed 130 people in the volatile Kurram district.

The clashes between Alizai and Bagan tribes in the district started on 22 November, after an attack on a convoy of passenger vans near Parachinar in which 47 people were killed a day earlier. Several passengers who had sustained injuries succumbed later, raising the toll to 57.

The death toll from the violence surged to 130, with at least six people killed and eight injured on Sunday.

CM Gandapur's cousin killed

A cousin of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur was shot dead by unidentified gun-men in northwest Pakistan on Monday, police said. Sardar Saqlain Khan Gandapur was shot dead in Dera Ismail Khan district, the native place of the chief minister, a police official said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Internet services face disruption

Internet users across Pakistan faced disruption in accessing various online platforms on Sunday, accord-ing to a media report. Popular platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have either been suspended or were oper-ating at reduced speeds, leaving users frustrated with limited access. Around 52 per cent of the users reported issues in sending messages.

Toy bomb blast kills 3 children

At least three children, including two brothers, were killed on Monday when a toy bomb exploded in Pa-kistan's restive northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Local sources report that the children were on their way home from the madrassa when the mortar shell explosion took place and claimed the lives of three students, including two brothers.

Trudeau promises Trump tougher border controls

OTTAWA, 2 DEC

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised President-elect Donald Trump that Canada would toughen controls over the long undefended joint border, a senior Canadian official said on Sunday. Tru-deau flew to Florida on Friday to have dinner with Trump, who has promised to slap tariffs on Canadian imports unless Ottawa prevents migrants and drugs from crossing the frontier.

Canada sends 75 percent of all goods and services exports to the United States and tariffs would badly hurt the economy.

Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, who sat at the head table with Trudeau and Trump, said the two men discussed additional security measures Canada would be introducing.

"We're going to look to procure, for example, additional drones, additional police helicopters, we're going to redeploy personnel ... we believe that the border is secure," he told the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.

PHOTO: X/@JUSTINTRUDEAU

The friendly nature of the dinner contrasts with previous exchanges between the two men. Trump called Trudeau "a far-left lunatic" in 2022 for requiring truck drivers crossing the border to be vac-cinated against COVID. In June 2018, Trump walked out of a G7 summit in Quebec and blasted Trudeau for being "very dishonest and weak."At the end of the dinner, LeBlanc said, Trump walked Trudeau to his car and said "Keep in touch. Call me anytime. Talk soon." *—Arab News*

AS WAR RAGES ON

Gaza situation is apocalyptic: UN Chief

DUBAI, 2 DEC

The United Nations Chief on Monday said hat the situation in Gaza was "appalling and apocalyptic", warning conditions faced by Palestinians in the territory may amount to the "gravest international crimes". UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the international community to "build a foundation for sustainable peace in Gaza and across the Middle East".

The UN chief added that Gaza now has "the highest number of children amputees per capita anywhere in the world", with "many losing limbs and undergoing surgeries without even anesthesia".

Meanwhile, US Navy destroyers successfully intercepted seven missiles and drones launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels aimed at their warships and three American merchant vessels they were escorting through the Gulf of Aden. Fortunately, no damage or injuries were reported. The identities of the merchant ships involved have not been disclosed. *—Agencies*

Scholz pledges $680m in military aid to Ukraine

BERLIN, 2 DEC

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has pledged additional military support worth USD 680 million to Ukraine in an unannounced visit to Kyiv after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sought security guarantees from NATO to defend itself amid steady Russian advances.

In a statement announcing his visit on Monday, Scholz said the military aid will be delivered this month, amid Ukraine's renewed effort to defend its territory, about 20 percent of which has been occupied by Russia.

The visit, his second since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly three years ago, comes amid un-certainty before President-elect Donald Trump takes the reins at the White House and as Russian forces make territorial gains.

Olaf Scholz
PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

"I would like to make it clear here on the ground that Germany will remain Ukraine's strongest supporter in Europe.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's air force reported that Russia launched 110 drones into the country overnight. One of the drones hit a residential building in the western city of Ternopil, killing one person and injuring several others. Russian attacks against Ukraine killed at least four people and injured 23 across multiple regions, authorities said. *—Al Jazeera*

DRUGS WORTH $760M

13 held in Australia's largest drug bust

QUEENSLAND, 2 DEC

Australian police have arrested 13 individuals in what is being described as the largest cocaine bust in the country's history. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) announced on Monday that they have charged 11 men and two juveniles following an operation that tracked a fishing boat allegedly sent to collect cocaine from a mother ship off the coast of Queensland.

The operation came to a head when the boat broke down 18 kilometres offshore, leading to multiple arrests and the seizure of 2.3 tonnes of cocaine valued at approximately 760 million Australian dollars, according to the AFP.

This extensive investigation was spurred by a tip-off regarding plans by a motorcycle gang to smuggle drugs into Australia. AFP Commander Stephen Jay remarked, "We know that criminals go to extreme lengths, and often risk their own lives, to smuggle drugs into Australia with no regard to the harm they cause to Australian communities."

In the current financial year, Australian police have seized a total of 31.3 tonnes of illicit drugs *PHOTO: FB/ AUSTRALIANFEDERALPOLICE*

Jay emphasised the dangers these criminal operations pose, stating, "This alleged attempt to collect more than two tonnes of cocaine from the ocean shows that criminals will do anything for their own greed and profit. Anyone involved in these at-sea trafficking enterprises is not just risking their freedom – they're also risking their life."

The arrested individuals, all charged with conspiracy to import a commercial quantity of border-controlled drugs, were due to appear in court on Monday and face a maximum penalty of life imprison-ment if convicted. In the current financial year, police have seized a total of 31.3 tonnes of illicit drugs and have assisted international authorities in confiscating an additional 41.8 tonnes. *—Al Jazeera*

'SELECTIVELY PROSECUTED'

President Joe Biden accompanied by his son Hunter Biden and his grandson Beau *PHOTO: PTI*

In a U-turn, Biden pardons son Hunter in gun, tax fraud

- US President Biden said the charges in his cases came about only after several of his political opponents in Congress instigated them to attack me and oppose his election

WASHINGTON DC, 2 DEC

Outgoing US President Joe Biden Sunday issued "a full and unconditional pardon" to Hunter Biden arguing that he was singled out only because he was his son.

"For my entire career I have followed a simple principle: just tell the American people the truth. They'll be fair-minded. Here's the truth: I believe in the justice system, but as I have wrestled with this, I also believe raw politics has infected this process and it led to a miscarriage of justice – and once I made this decision this weekend, there was no sense in delaying it further," Biden said in a statement Sunday night.

Hunter was convicted early this year on federal gun and tax charges and was set to appear soon in Delon, California, where he faced the potential of lengthy prison sentences.

"From the day I took office, I said I would not interfere with the Justice Department's decision-making, and I kept my word even as I have watched my son being selectively, and unfairly, prosecuted," Joe Biden said.

Biden said the charges in his cases came about only after several of his political opponents in Congress instigated them to attack me and oppose his election.

US president-elect Donald Trump said, "Does the Pardon given by Joe to Hunter include the J-6 Hostag-es, who have now been imprisoned for years? Such an abuse and miscarriage of Justice!"

The J6 hostages is a reference to those people imprisoned for their role in the 6 January, 2021 riots on Capitol Hill, Trump and his supporters have called the imprisoned people hostages claiming they were acting peacefully and patriotically.

It has been speculated that once Donald Trump takes over as President he will issue a pardon for those who are imprisoned for their role in the siege of Capitol Hill on 6 January, 2021. *—ANI*

Taiwan's Prez visits Hawaii amid China's criticism

HONOLULU, 2 DEC

Taiwan's President **Lai Ching-te** visited a US State Department-funded think tank in Hawaii on Sunday, during a two-day trip that forms part of a Pacific island tour that has drawn condemnation from Beijing.

Lai met with Suzanne Puanani Vares-Lum, president of the East-West Center, located at the University of Hawaii's Manoa campus, where he spoke to an audience before journalists were escorted out of the hall. China's Foreign Ministry condemned US support for Lai's visit and protested a recent US arms sale to Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory.

On Saturday, Hawaii Governor Josh Green welcomed Lai at the state's emergency management agency, where they discussed disaster preparedness, drawing on their backgrounds in healthcare. Lai is a trained physician and holds a Master of Public Health degree from Harvard.

PHOTO: X@ASIANAMERICANUS

Lai's tour includes visits to the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, and Palau, which maintain formal diplomatic relations with Taipei. While in Hawaii, Lai engaged with local congressional representatives and the Tai-wanese-American community. *—PTI*

Rupee drops 13 paise to all-time low of 84.73

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

The rupee depreciated 13 paise to close at an all-time low of 84.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, on disappointing macroeconomic data and broad strength of the American currency in the overseas markets. Forex traders said Asian currencies were down after Trump Rhetoric on BRICs currency, as the move may further strengthen the greenback. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.59 and touched the lowest level of 84.73 against the greenback during intra-day trade. The unit ended the session at an all-time low of 84.73 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 13 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee plunged 13 paise to settle at a fresh all-time low of 84.60 against the US dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.51 per cent at 106.27. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold falls ₹200; silver plummets ₹2,200

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Gold prices fell Rs 200 to Rs 79,200 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid weak trends in the international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity closed at Rs 79,400 per 10 grams on Friday. Silver also plummeted Rs 2,200 to Rs 90,000 per kg due to reduced offtake by industrial units and coin makers. It had closed at Rs 92,200 per kg in the previous trading session. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 200 to Rs 78,800 per 10 grams. The precious metal ended at Rs 79,000 per 10 grams on Friday. Silver, too, fell 1.36 per cent at USD 30.69 per ounce in the Asian market hours. *—PTI*

Coal India's production rises over 2% in Apr-Nov

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

State-owned CIL's coal production rose by 2.4 per cent to 471 million tonnes (MT) in the April-November period of the current financial year. Coal India Ltd (CIL) produced 460 MT of coal in the year-ago period. CIL accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal production. The company's production also rose by 1.7 per cent to 67.2 MT in November against 66 MT in the corresponding month a year ago, CIL said in a regulatory filing to BSE. Coal offtake by CIL, which is the amount of dry fuel supplied from coal pitheads, rose by 1.5 per cent to 492.6 MT in the April-November period of the current fiscal, compared to 485.2 MT in the year-ago period. *—PTI*

Ola Electric plans to expand 4,000 stores by 20 Dec

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Ola Electric on Monday said it plans a four-fold expansion of its company-owned store network to 4,000 by 20 December, 2024. The company currently has 800 existing ones and more than 3,200 new stores are set to open, Ola Electric said in a statement. Commenting on the planned network expansion, Ola Electric Chairman & Managing Director, Bhavish Aggarwal said, "With our wide D2C network and the touchpoints under our 'network partner programme', we will cover the entire country beyond tier-I and tier-2 cities." Under its network partner programme, the company plans to onboard 10,000 partners across sales and service by the end of 2025. *—PTI*

Govt scraps windfall tax on ATF, crude and fuels

Oil firms like Reliance & ONGC gets big relief

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

The government on Monday withdrew the windfall tax levied on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), crude products, petrol and diesel through a notification introduced in the Lok Sabha.

The withdrawal of the windfall tax is a big relief to the oil companies like Reliance and ONGC.

The tax was imposed in July 2022 to seek a share of higher revenue earned by these oil giants because of rising global crude prices through higher refining margins.

The removal of the tax will make these companies make higher profits on refining margins.

The Ministry of Finance notification says that the special additional excise duty (SAED), commonly known as windfall tax on the production of petroleum crude and on the export of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), motor spirit, commonly known as petrol and high spirit diesel oil will no longer be levied.

The tax rates were reviewed every fortnight earlier PHOTO: X

The windfall tax used to be revised every 15 days based on international crude oil prices after it was imposed in July 2022.

The tax rates were reviewed every fortnight, based on the average oil price in the last two weeks.

The tax formula used to be managed by the Department of Revenue and adjusted as per the fluctuations in global oil prices.

But now with average crude oil prices coming down government was not earning much in revenue from any of the sectors. *—ANI*

11-MONTH LOW

Manufacturing growth dips to 56.5 in November

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

India's manufacturing sector growth fell to a joint 11-month low of 56.5 in November, restricted by competitive conditions and inflationary pressures amid a softer increase in factory orders, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell from 57.5 in October to 56.5 in November, signalling a softer improvement in the health of the sector. However, the pace of growth remained above its long-run average.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

According to the survey, the expansion in sales and output in the manufacturing sector during November was largely supported by positive demand trends, though firms indicated that growth was somewhat restricted by competitive conditions and price pressures.

India's retail inflation soared to a 14-month high of 6.21 per cent in October --above the RBI's tolerance band, mainly on account of rising food prices. It was 5.49 per cent in September.

The RBI, which is mandated by the government to contain inflation at 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent) has projected retail inflation to be 4.5 per cent in the current fiscal year.

Although price pressures curbed domestic sales to a certain extent, the growth of new export orders gained momentum.

With demand conditions remaining favourable, Indian manufacturers continued to scale up production. Accordingly, for the ninth month in a row, factory employment in India increased during November. *—PTI*

Trump's tariff threat: Ex-RBI guv questions legality

HYDERABAD, 2 DEC

President-elect Donald Trump's warning that BRICS countries will face 100 per cent tariffs if they choose to move away from the US dollar is unclear to what extent he will carry out his threat, as it remains to be seen if the US laws permit such an action, former RBI Governor Duvvuri Subbarao said on Monday.

He also said even for BRICS, there are internal differences about bringing out an alternative to the US Dollar. The nine-member group that includes India, Russia, China, and Brazil, moving out of the US currency and having a common one remains a non-starter because of both politics and economics.

"Donald Trump has threatened to slap 100 per cent tariffs on imports from countries that try to move out of the dollar. His ire was particularly directed at the BRICS bloc which has been actively talking about developing an alternative to the dollar. Trump is known to bark more than he bites," Subbarao told.

"It's not clear to what extent he will carry out his threat. And does American law permit imposing sanctions on countries merely because they are de-dollarising."? *—PTI*

Mkt settles higher on buying in blue-chips

MUMBAI, 2 DEC

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher on Monday amid buying in blue-chip stocks Reliance Industries, Infosys and HDFC Bank along with a firm trend in the US markets.

Recovering the early lost ground, the BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 445.29 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 80,248.08. During the day, it hit a high of 80,337.82 and a low of 79,308.95.

The NSE Nifty surged 144.95 points or 0.60 per cent to 24,276.05.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, UltraTech Cement, JSW Steel, Adani Ports, Tech Mahindra, Titan, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel and Reliance Industries were the biggest gainers.

NTPC, Hindustan Unilever, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank and Larsen & Toubro were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul settled lower while Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended higher.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

European markets were trading mostly lower. US markets ended in the positive territory on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,383.55 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 5,723.34 crore.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.85 per cent to USD 72.45 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark jumped 759.05 points or 0.96 per cent to settle at 79,802.79 on Friday. The Nifty climbed 216.95 points or 0.91 per cent to 24,131.10. *—PTI*

Stocks of 6 Adani Group settle lower; Adani Total declines 5%

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Shares of six Adani Group firms ended lower on Monday, with Adani Total Gas falling nearly 5 per cent.

The stock of Adani Total Gas dropped 4.87 per cent to Rs 772 on the BSE and Adani Energy Solutions tanked 4.04 per cent to Rs 806.60.

Shares of NDTV dipped 1.29 per cent, Adani Wilmar went lower by 1.23 per cent, Adani Power declined 1 per cent and Adani Enterprises skidded 0.28 per cent.

The stock of Adani Green Energy Ltd surged to Rs 1,445 during the morning trade but later gave up most of the early gains and ended at Rs 1,327.95, up 0.26 per cent.

Shares of Adani Ports climbed 2.18 per cent, Ambuja Cements went up 1.34 per cent, Sanghi Industries (0.65 per cent), and ACC (0.38 per cent).

Meanwhile, Care Ratings has upgraded Gopalpur Port's ratings by six notches -- from BBB (Rating Watch Positive) to AA/Stable, post its acquisition by Adani Ports and SEZ in March.

Care Ratings has upgraded Gopalpur Port's ratings by 6 notches PHOTO: PTI

In a statement, the rating agency said besides revising the rating, Gopalpur Ports Ltd (GPL) has also been removed from 'credit watch with positive implications' following change in ownership from Shapoorji Pallonji group to Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) and subsequent prepayment of 64 per cent of external debt supported by funds infusion from the new promoter.

APSEZ, it said, has a track record of turning around port assets including Dhamra port post-acquisition through a combination of logistics solutions. *—PTI*

INDIA EXPORTS ORGANIC FOOD WORTH $450M

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

India has exported organic food products worth nearly USD 450 million till November 25 of the current fiscal year, the government said on Monday.

The country has exported 2,63,050 tonnes for USD 447.73 million till November 25 of the current fiscal, an official statement said.

Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries Navneet Singh Bittu shared the data of organic food products exported during the last five years and current year in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

As per the data, 6,38,998 tonnes were exported in 2019-20 for USD 689.10 million; 8,88,179.68 tonnes for USD 1,040.95 million in 2020-21; 4,60,320.40 tonnes for USD 771.96 million in 2021-22; 3,12,800.51 tonnes for USD 708.33 million in 2022-23; and 2,61,029 tonnes for USD 494.80 million in 2023-24 financial year. *—PTI*

GST tax cut could ease insurance premiums: FM

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said the cost of insurance to the policy holder is expected to come down if the GST Council recommends a reduction in GST rate on health and life insurance policies.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, she said the GST Council in its September 9 meeting had recommended to constitute a Group of Ministers (GoM) to holistically look into the issues pertaining to GST on life insurance and health insurance.

Sitharaman said this while replying to the question on whether GST reduction on health insurance will be a step towards making healthcare more equitable.

To a query on how the government will ensure that insurance companies pass on the benefits of any GST reduction to consumers, rather than retaining them through increased premiums, Sitharaman said competitive pricing would bring down the cost of insurance.

Currently, an 18 per cent GST is levied on premiums paid for life and health insurance policies.

The GST Council, chaired by Sitharaman and comprising her state counterparts, is slated to meet on 21 December where report on reduction of GST on life and health insurance will be discussed. *—PTI*

Real estate draws ₹75,500 cr from AIFs

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Investment in Indian real estate by Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) has touched nearly Rs 75,500 crore in more than a decade, the highest among all sectors with a 17 per cent share in the total inflow through this route, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Anarock on Monday said that the Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) have shown impressive growth in India over the last ten years. Out of all sectors, real estate stands out as the leading choice for AIF investments across the country.

"Latest SEBI data compiled by Anarock indicates that out of a total of Rs 4,49,384 crore AIF investments made across sectors till H1, FY2025 (till September of this fiscal), real estate's share was the highest at 17 per cent- totalling nearly Rs 75,468 crore," the consultant said.

Out of all sectors, real estate stands out as the leading choice for AIF investments across the country PHOTO: PTI

Other sectors benefiting from AIF investments are IT/ITeS, financial services, NBFCs, banks, pharma, FMCG, retail, renewable energy, and others.

The consultant highlighted that the AIF in India has seen a substantial decadal increase in the number of funds available for investment. *—PTI*

Avg housing prices up 11% in 8 cities

India's eight major residential markets saw an average 11 per cent increase in prices annually during the September quarter on strong housing demand

Delhi-NCR	₹11,438 per sq ft
Bengaluru	₹11,743 per sq ft
Ahmedabad	₹7,640 per sq ft
Pune	₹9,890 per sq ft
Mumbai	₹20,438 per sq ft
Hyderabad	₹11,351 per sq ft
Kolkata	₹7,616 per sq ft
Chennai	₹7,889 per sq ft

Swiggy expands 10-min delivery to over 400 cities

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

On-demand convenience platform Swiggy Ltd on Monday said it has expanded its 10-minute food delivery offering, Bolt, to over 400 cities and towns across India.

Initially launched in Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Mumbai, and Pune, Bolt is now active in cities like Jaipur, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Indore, Coimbatore, and Kochi as well, Swiggy said in a statement.

Swiggy has expanded the 10-minute food delivery service to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities such as Roorkee, Guntur, Warangal, Patna, Jagtial, Solan, Nashik and Shillong among others, it added.

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have witnessed the highest adoption for Bolt followed by Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Punjab, it added.

PHOTO: PTI

Swiggy said it is actively partnering with restaurants to optimise order prioritisation for Bolt orders that have food items with minimum or no preparation time.

Additionally, the speed of delivery is optimised by prioritising delivery executives closest to Bolt outlets, it added.

Designed for speed, Bolt focuses on dishes that can be delivered without compromising on taste, freshness, or quality. It delivers food from more than 40,000 participating restaurants with a range of over 10 Lakh items to choose from, it added. *—PTI*

IN INDIA'S FIRST

Uber launches water transport with shikara bookings

SRINAGAR, 2 DEC

Ride-hailing app Uber has launched its first water transport service in India, with a booking of a shikara at Dal Lake in Srinagar through its app, a senior company official said on Monday.

The company introduced the first service of its kind in Asia.

An Uber spokesperson confirmed that Uber's water transport service in India is also the first in Asia.

Uber offers water transport booking in some of the European countries including Venice in Italy.

In India, the company has initially onboarded seven shikaras and plans to gradually expand the fleet based on the service's traction.

In India, Uber has initially onboarded seven shikaras PHOTO: PTI

Uber users will be able to book shikara at government-determined rates.

The company's spokesperson said Uber is not charging any fees from its shikara partners and the entire amount will be passed to them.

Each Uber Shikara ride can be booked for a period of 1 hour between 10 am to 5 pm, allowing up to 4 passengers from Shikara Ghat No 16.

Uber Shikara rides can be booked 12 hours prior and up to 15 days in advance. *—PTI*

ZEPTO PLANS 2025 IPO, CEO DENIES IMPACT ON KIRANAS

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

Fresh out of bumper USD 350 million funding this time from marquee domestic investors, quick commerce company Zepto says it is on a clear path to becoming a full Indian-owned entity and hitting PAT positive milestone, as co-founder and CEO Aadit Palicha exudes optimism about a possible IPO in 2025.

Palicha further said that instant 10-minute delivery models like that of Zepto have generated lakhs of jobs, been wage-additive, and created all-around "value" for both consumers and workers.

Moreover, the quick commerce model executed at a scale for groceries and items of daily use is unseen, unmatched globally, he said adding that this goes to showcase the unique strengths of Indian technology. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Santosh Trophy final to begin on 14 December

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

The final round of the 78th Senior National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy will begin on 14 December in Hyderabad, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) announced on Monday. Twelve teams – nine winners from the group stage, two finalists from last season (Services and Goa) and hosts Telangana – are divided into two groups of six each. The top four teams from each group will qualify for the quarter-finals to be played on 26 and 27 December. All matches until the quarter-finals will take place at the Deccan Arena. The semifinals on 29 December and the final on 31 December will be held at the GMC Balayogi Athletic Stadium, the AIFF said. *—PTI*

19,000 DAV athletes to join national event

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

A total of 19,000 athletes and coaches from 22 states of DAV Institutions will participate in the inaugural DAV National Sports Festival being held in the national capital from 2 to 4 December. The event will be held across 30 disciplines for DAV students at six venues of the National Capital Region (NCR). It will be held in in U-14, U-17 and U-19 categories for boys and girls. A grand opening ceremony of the sports festival was held at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium on Monday. DAV College Managing Committee president Padma Shri Punam Suri was the chief guest. Olympian hockey player Ashok Dhyan Chand, son of hockey great Major Dhyan Chand, was also present at the ceremony. *—PTI*

Pranavi lands third, records career best in LET

MALAGA, 2 DEC

Indian golfer Pranavi Urs registered her best pay day as she finished third in the season-ending Andalucía Costa del Sol Open de España on the Ladies European Tour (LET) in Malaga. Playing in her first year on the LET, Pranavi rounded off the week with four-under 68 to total 14-under and sole third. She picked up 42,000 euros and rose to 17th on the LET Order of Merit. "I couldn't have asked for a better week. Well, I could if I had won, but I was close yesterday until the 13th hole. I know how well I can play under pressure. I think I handled that situation pretty well yesterday, so it was a good week overall," she said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Alpine releases Ocon ahead on Grand Prix season

PARIS, 2 DEC

Formula 1 team Alpine confirmed on Monday that Esteban Ocon has been released ahead of the final Grand Prix of the season and that Jack Doohan will make his debut in Abu Dhabi. The team said in a statement that the lineup change will allow Ocon to participate in post-season tests with his new team Haas. Alpine had announced in June that Ocon would leave at the end of the season after a troubled start to the year in F1 for him and the French-owned team. Doohan was promoted from the reserve driver role to become Pierre Gasly's teammate. Ocon was in 14th place in the driver's standings. He crashed out of the Qatar Grand Prix on Sunday. *—PTI*

Head rules out divide in Aus camp ahead of pink ball Test

After 1st test, Hazlewood expressed his frustration with batters

ADELAIDE, 2 DEC

Australian big-hitter Travis Head on Monday asserted there is no "divide" between his team's struggling batters and its potent bowling attack as they geared up to bounce back in the pink-ball Test against India on 6 December.

Australia suffered an embarrassing 295-run loss as their batters struggled to cope with the bouncy Perth pitch.

On day three of the Test, pacer Josh Hazlewood, who picked four wickets in first essay, made a comment that seemed to suggest frustration with the team's batters. triggering speculation of tensions in the dressing room.

Head said there was no reason to doubt the dressing room dynamics.

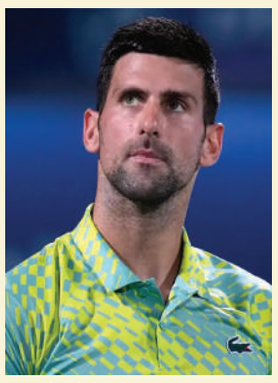
"It can be put to bed. We hold high expectations for both sides (batting and bowling) and it's a very individualised sport," Head said.

Travis Head said there was no reason to doubt the dressing room dynamics PHOTO: X

"So batters, we want to hold our own – we know how good our bowlers have been for us in the past and they've got us out of trouble a lot. As a batting group, we know that if we get enough runs on the board, we put ourselves in a great position," he said. The Australian top-order comprising the likes of Usman Khawaja, Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne crumbled at Perth.

> **Jasprit will go down as probably one of the greatest fast bowlers to play the game. It's gonna be nice to go back and look at your career and go tell the grandkids that you faced him**
>
> -Travis Head, Australian batsman

Labuschagnem, in particular, has been woefully out of form and several former players have called for his exclusion from the side but Head backed him to get some big runs. Trailing the five match series 0-1, Australia have their backs against the wall as the race for the World Test Championship final has also intensified. *—PTI*



Novak Djokovic PHOTO: X

MURRAY KNOWS ME WELL, SAYS DJOKOVIC

BUENOS AIRES, 2 DEC

Hiring Andy Murray as his coach came naturally for Novak Djokovic. On a trip to Argentina to play in a farewell match for Juan Martín del Potro, the Serbian explained why he chose his former rival after being without a coach for six months.

Murray and Djokovic announced last week they plan to work together for the Australian Open in January.

"Since I was very young, I have played against him… and there are not many people who have won multiple Grand Slam titles," said Djokovic in Spanish in a press conference before the match against Del Potro.

Djokovic is a 24-time Grand Slam champion who has spent more weeks at No. 1 than any other player in tennis history. Murray won three major trophies and two Olympic singles gold medals and finished 2016 atop the ATP rankings. He ended his playing career after the Paris Olympics in August. Both men are 37 and were born a week apart in May 1987. They started facing each other as juniors and wound up meeting 36 times as professionals, with Djokovic holding a 25-11 advantage. *—PTI*

India beat Japan in U-19 Asia Cup

SHARJAH, 2 DEC

Mohamed Amaan led from the front with an unbeaten century, while KP Karthikeya and opener Ayush Mhatre made fifties to hand India a comfortable 211-run victory over minnows Japan in the Under-19 Asia Cup here on Monday.

Amaan slammed an unbeaten 122 off just 118 balls, a knock studded with only seven boundaries, after India were invited to bat.

Besides Amaan, Karthikeya made 57 off 49 balls with the help of five fours and one six, while Mhatre's fiery 29-ball 54-run knock featured six boundaries and four hits over the fence. C Andre Siddarth (38), Hardik Raj (25 not out), and Vaibhav Suryavanshi (23) also played useful knocks to help India post a mammoth 339 for 6 in their 50 overs.

Amaan slammed an unbeaten 122 off just 118 balls, a knock studded with only seven boundaries, after India were invited to bat PHOTO: BCCI

Hugo Kelly (2/42) and Kiefer Yamamoto-Lake (2/84) took two wickets each for Japan. It was an easy outing for the Indians, as they restricted Japan to 128 for 8, securing their first win in Group A.

However, the Indians will be a little disappointed, as they failed to bowl out Japan.

After picking up two wickets earlier in the day, Kelly returned as Japan's top-scorer with a gritty 50 off 111 balls. Charles Hinze remained unbeaten on 35. *—PTI*

Fiorentina's Edoardo Bove (inset) is surrounded by players during the Serie A soccer match between Fiorentina and Inter Italy PHOTO: X

Bove wakes up hours after induced coma

FLORENCE, 2 DEC

Italian soccer club Fiorentina says midfielder Edoardo Bove is awake and "alert" after being placed in a medically induced coma following his collapse during a game on Sunday.

The 22-year-old Bove collapsed on the field in the 16th minute of a Serie A match against Inter Milan.

He was carried off on a stretcher to an ambulance near the pitch and taken to Careggi Hospital in Florence. The game was abandoned.

Bove's teammates immediately called for medical help and both sets of players surrounded the 22-year-old while he was being treated before he was swiftly stretchered off to an ambulance near the pitch and taken to Careggi Hospital in Florence on Sunday. "The first cardiological and neurological tests performed have ruled out acute damage to the central nervous system and the cardio-respiratory system. Edoardo Bove will be re-evaluated in the next 24 hours." Bove, who arrived at Fiorentina on a season-long loan from AS Roma this summer, has rapidly established himself as a key figure in the midfield. *—PTI*

Mohun Bagan clinch narrow win in ISL

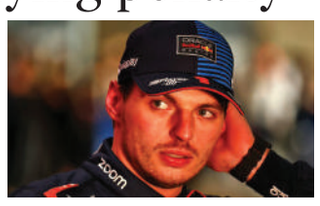
KOLKATA, 2 DEC

Mohun Bagan Super Giant secured a hard-fought 1-0 victory against Chennaiyin FC during their Indian Super League (ISL) encounter at Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan Stadium on Saturday. The match was decided by a powerful strike from Jason Cummings, who broke the deadlock late in the game.

The first half was a lively contest, with Chennaiyin FC applying pressure through Lalrinliana Hnamte and Ryan Edwards, who both created promising scoring chances. Hnamte tested the Mariners' defence from distance, but his shot was blocked, while Edwards' header was thwarted by the home side's resolute backline. Entering the second half, Chennaiyin's Wilmar Jordan Gil and Connor Shields continued to press, but their efforts went unrewarded, as a cross from Shields failed to find the target. In the 86th minute, Mohun Bagan capitalised on their opponents' missed chances. *—ANI*

Verstappen fumes at Russell over F1 qualifying penalty

LUSAIL, 2 DEC



Max Verstappen PHOTO: X

Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen has expressed his displeasure with Mercedes driver George Russell, claiming he has "lost all respect" for him following a qualifying incident that cost him pole position for the Qatar Grand Prix.

Verstappen was just 0.055 seconds quicker than Russell during qualifying, but a stewards' inquiry resulted in a one-place penalty for Verstappen for driving "unnecessarily slowly." Russell had raised concerns over the radio, describing the situation as "super dangerous." Post-race, Verstappen voiced his frustration, stating, "I've never seen someone trying to screw someone over that hard," adding that he believed his slow pace was considerate to avoid impeding others.

Despite the penalty, the impact on the race was minimal as Verstappen overtook Russell at the first corner and secured his ninth win of the season. *—PTI*

AFTER NEW ZEALAND DEFEAT

Mohammed Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah PHOTOS: PTI

Siraj credits Bumrah for bounce back

CANBERRA, 2 DEC

- Meanwhile, Cheteshwar Pujara said Bumrah possesses all the qualities of being a good skipper, and India should look at him as long-term captaincy candidate.

Back in form with five wickets in India's brilliant come-from-behind win in the Perth Test against Australia, Mohammed Siraj has credited his senior pace colleague and attack spearhead Jasprit Bumrah for helping him turn things around after an ordinary home series against New Zealand.

The 30-year-old endured a difficult home season, managing just two wickets in two Tests during India's disastrous 0–3 loss to New Zealand prior to the tour Down Under, but returned to his best in the opening Test against Australia.

"I always keep talking to Jassi bhai (Bumrah). Even before the first match, I spoke with him. And he just told me one thing – don't run (chase) after wickets, just keep bowling consistently in one area and enjoy your bowling. So I enjoyed my bowling and I got wickets as well," Siraj said after the India's six-wicket win over Australian Prime Minister's XI in a practice match in Canberra on Sunday. The second Test against Australia, a day-night game, begins in Adelaide from Friday. It would be the first time that Siraj would be bowling with the pink ball under lights.

"I think with the pink-ball, it's better to bowl back of length. Because pitching it up, there's not a lot of swing, so the more you hit the deck and get it to seam, it will be better for us," he noted.

"I have heard that the ball swings a lot under the lights but I haven't yet bowled with it under lights. So when we go to Adelaide and practice, we will try that. And the more practice we get, we'll know more about what we have to do." Meanwhile, Cheteshwar Pujara said Bumrah possesses all the qualities of being a good skipper, and India should look at him as long-term captaincy candidate once Rohit Sharma steps down.

"He is (a viable long term captaincy option) without any doubt. The way he has showed that in difficult circumstances when we had a tough series at home and when you are playing a first Test match in Australia and to put up a show like that...I think he has the capability of leading the team and he's a team's man," he said. *—PTI*

Mbappé treats Madrid fans to 2–0 win

MADRID, 2 DEC

Kylian Mbappe made some peace with Real Madrid's fans. Mbappe scored in Madrid's 2–0 win over Getafe in the Spanish league on Sunday to help ease the pressure on the France star.

Mbappé, who has been criticised by some supporters because of his disappointing performances since joining the Spanish powerhouse this season, found the net in the 38th minute to seal Madrid's victory at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

Jude Bellingham, also the target of some fans' criticism for recent poor play, had put Madrid ahead at the Bernabeu by converting a 30th-minute penalty. He also assisted in Mbappé's goal – a well-placed low shot from outside the area.

The win moved Madrid within a point of league leader Barcelona, which lost 2-1 to Las Palmas on Saturday. Madrid, the defending champion, has a game in hand.

Madrid was one point ahead of city rival Atletico Madrid, which won 5-0 at Valladolid on Saturday.

Madrid has lost three of its five Champions League matches but has won three straight in the league to cut into Barcelona's lead. *—PTI*

Seales shines as Windies gain edge over B'desh

KINGSTON, 2 DEC

Fast bowler Jayden Seales delivered an outstanding performance, taking four wickets for just five runs over nearly 16 overs, as West Indies seized the advantage on Day 2 of the second Test against Bangladesh.

Seales bowled a remarkable 10 maiden overs, playing a crucial role in dismantling the Bangladesh batting lineup which folded for 164 in 71.5 overs in their first innings. West Indies, replying to Bangladesh's total, reached 70-1 at the close of play, trailing by 94 runs. Captain Kraigg Brathwaite remained unbeaten on 33, while Keacy Carty was not out on 19.

The only wicket to fall for West Indies was that of Mikyle Louis, caught behind off Nahid Rana's bowling for 1.

Resuming at 69-2 on a challenging pitch at Sabina Park, Bangladesh struggled for runs, adding 53 runs for the loss of four wickets in the morning session. *—PTI*

WFI allows Rly wrestlers to represent states in Nationals

NEW DELHI, 2 DEC

- As many as 81 men's wrestlers, including both freestyle and Greco Roman, are attached with the Railways.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) will allow the Railways' wrestlers to represent their respective states at the upcoming National Championship after the departmental side opted not to send entries for the annual meet, a decision which the parent body will discuss at its AGM.

One of the crucial affiliated bodies of the WFI, Railways Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) has been represented by several reputed wrestlers in the past but no team was selected for the Nationals, starting December 6 in Bengaluru, since the national federation remains suspended.

As many as 81 men's wrestlers, including both freestyle and Greco Roman, are attached with the Railways. A coaching camp for these wrestlers is currently underway in Kapurthala, but the trials to select teams for the Nationals were not conducted, leaving the athletes baffled.

A WFI official said it baffles them why RSPB has taken such a stand.

A few Railways athletes had submitted affidavits to the WFI, pledging that they want to represent their respective states since Railways is not sending entries for the annual tournament.

A Railways coach had said there was no merit in sending teams since participation in these Nationals won't hold much value because the WFI is suspended. The Railways, at the start of the year, had asked its sportspersons to participate only in events that are organised by recognised sports bodies, advising its wrestlers not to compete in any tournament under the suspended WFI. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF MERCEDES EXIT

Hamilton's struggles continue in Qatar

LUSAIL, 2 DEC

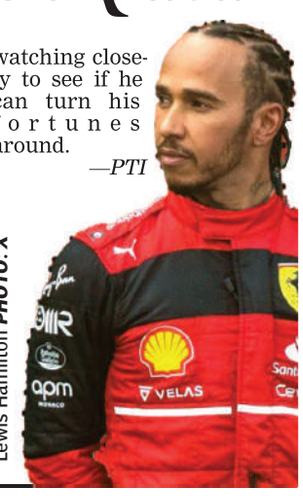
Lewis Hamilton faced another challenging race at the Qatar Grand Prix on Sunday, with discussions about retiring his Mercedes mid-race as he finished a disappointing 12th. The seven-time champion encountered a series of setbacks including two penalties, a puncture, and issues with the car's setup, leading him to describe the vehicle as "messed up" during radio communications with his team.

Hamilton's recent performances have been concerning, with him finishing behind teammate George Russell in the last five races, including sprints. After a promising second-place finish in Las Vegas a week prior, everything seemed to go awry in Qatar. Hamilton's race began poorly when he jumped the start, resulting in an early penalty. His problems compounded with a puncture that created a shower of sparks from the car and a further penalty for speeding in the pits.

Reflecting on the situation, Hamilton expressed doubts about finishing his time with Mercedes on a high note, stating, "I don't anticipate a particularly much better weekend than we've had in the past weekends, but I'll try."

Despite Hamilton's struggles, Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur remains optimistic about the driver's future. Highlighting Hamilton's impressive performance in Las Vegas, Vasseur remarked, "I'm not worried at all," implying that the veteran still possesses the talent needed to succeed.

With one race left for Hamilton with Mercedes before his move to Ferrari, the team and fans alike will be watching closely to see if he can turn his fortunes around. *—PTI*



Lewis Hamilton PHOTO: X